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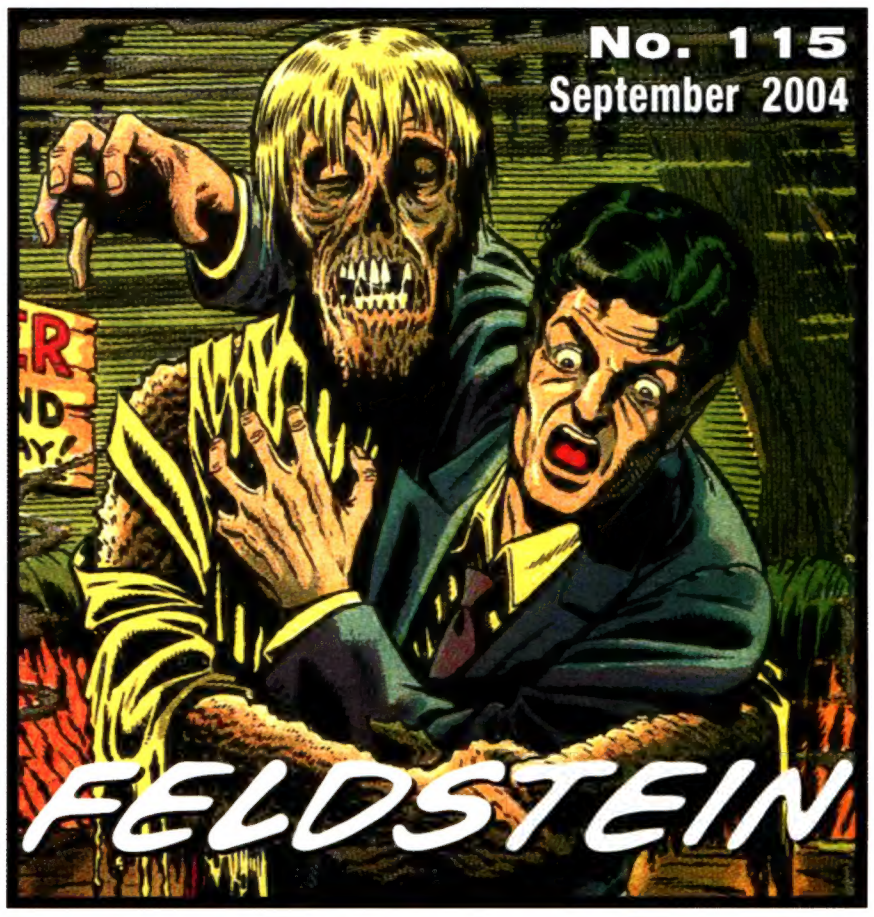

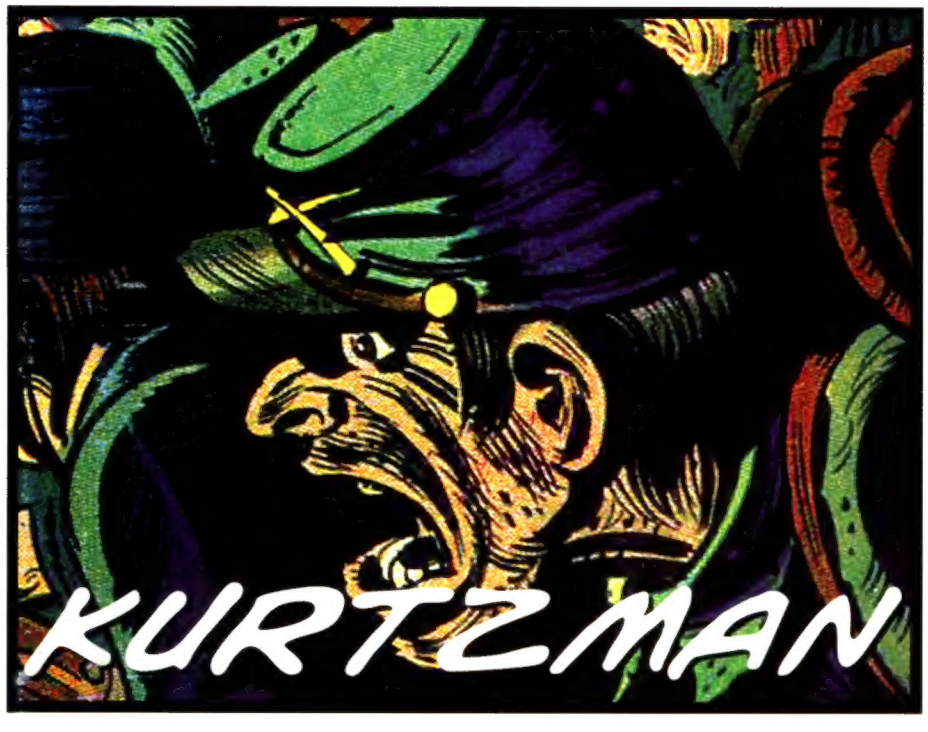

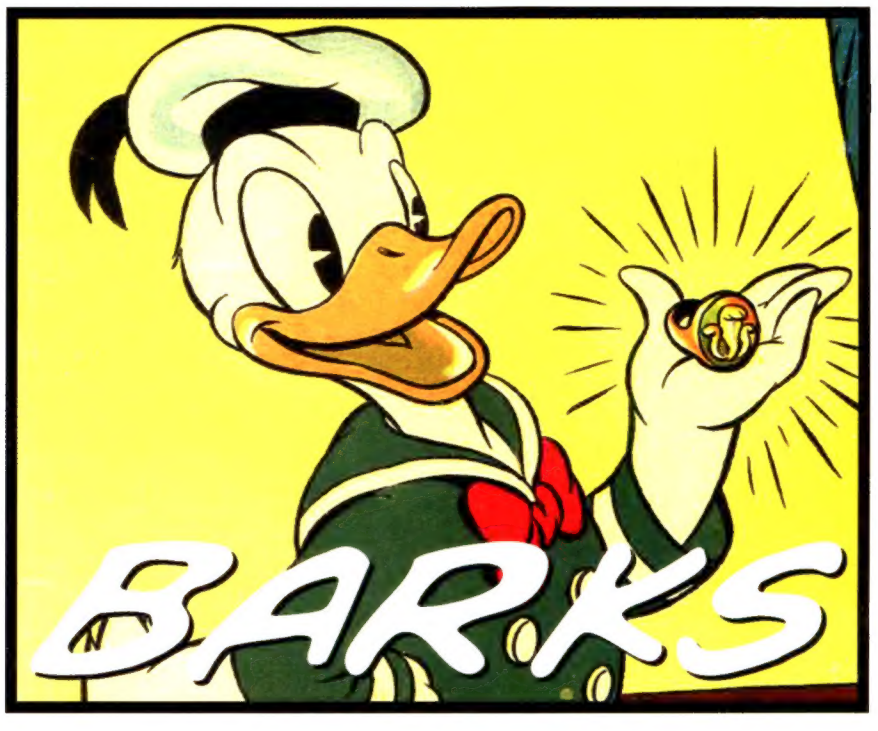

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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

A GEMSTONE PUBLICATION

Vol. 3 No. 115 September 2004

UTTERED THE WORD `LAURIE'...THE WORD
MANNING FROM HIS HYPNOTIC TRANCE!AS
HED, HORRIFIED, ARNOLD FELL BACK LIMPLY
ELED, AND TURNED FROM PINK TO BLUE TO
S SUNK DEEP INTO HIS HEAD! THEN THEY
KETS! THE FLESH... ROTTED AND STINKING..
N, THE BED WAS COVERED WITH NOTHING
S OF PUTRID AND DECAYED FLESH...
14
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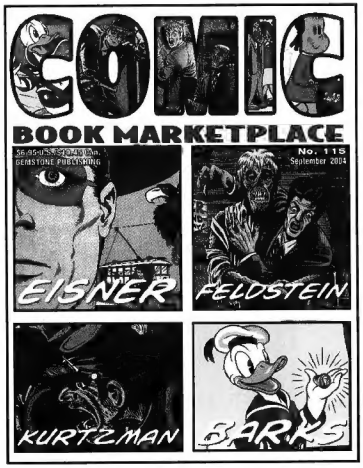

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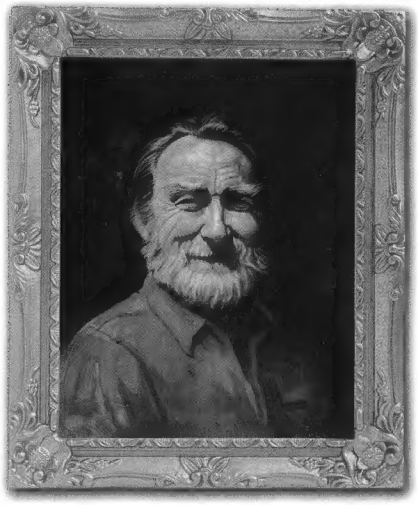
Letter from the Editor



This issue of *CBM*, plus the next three issues after this, will have some of the best stuff in it that you have ever seen in any magazine about the comics. We are still having problems with getting our sales of each issue up, so now would be a great time for you to subscribe to show your support for what we are trying to do here.

I am trying my best to give you thoughtful, insightful articles about comic books in particular and the world of comic art in general, and that's a pretty wide world. I want *CBM* to appeal to all comic book collectors of all ages, plus those interested in other aspects of comic art and related fields of collecting. What I am trying to avoid is the type of article which once was dominant in *CBM* and other similar magazines, in which the article gives the reader a summary of plot outlines and other well-worn facts about the comics and their creators.

In this issue we talk about the auteurs of comic books—those few geniuses who pretty much did the whole thing, from concept to writing the story and then penciling and inking it. There are not very many to talk about: Will Eisner, Carl Barks, Harvey Kurtzman, and Walt Kelly (who deserves, and will receive, much more attention than the mere mention of his name in this issue). It will take more than one issue to adequately handle all of these giants of the comics, and this issue only scratches the surface of this important and often-neglected area.

The next three issues after this are special because of a very important trio of articles written by Arie Kaplan about how Jews started the comic book industry, and our designer Michael Kronenberg will be given carte blanche in our presentations of these important and historic articles. We will talk about how a few Jewish publishers, like Bill Gaines, fought to present stories that were strong statements about anti-Semitism and racial prejudice in his immortal line of EC comics. This is serious business. These topics should be of interest to all comic book collectors and popular culture scholars, and I am expecting them to create some waves and to stimulate you to write letters to *CBM* and let us know how you like them.

CBM is in the process of turning a corner in its continuing evolution from a "fanboy" magazine to a serious and entertaining account of the history of comics in all their forms. Now, don't worry! That doesn't mean a return to long articles about newspaper comics and original art, although they will continue to be topics of interest. We will continue to throw our spotlight, as we have done in the past year or so, on the field of comic books.

As always, your comments are solicited and much appreciated. I am rededicating myself to further improvements in *CBM* and I need your feedback to keep me on the right track.

Russ

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Nedor revival

I greatly enjoyed Will Murray's "The Knights of Nedor" in issue 112. I've always been fascinated by the Nedor characters, in the limited exposure that I've had to them. Rather than seeing them as low-rent MLJ knock-offs, however, I have always seen them as kin to some of the Fawcett characters—those who weren't members of the Marvel Family. I have always wished that they could be revived…a wish recently fulfilled.

So I must take issue with Will's contention that the characters have never been revived successfully!

DC/Wildstorm's imprint, America's Best Comics, brought the heroes back a few years ago in the pages of *Tom Strong*. A two-parter reminiscent of "Crisis on Earth-Two" rescued the characters from an alien-induced suspended animation. Their earth, on the opposite side of the galaxy from Tom Strong's, became known as "Terra Obscura."

That was the title of the ABC mini series published late last year, republished as a TPB this past May. Next week (August 18) sees publication of #1 of a second mini series. *Terra Obscura* is co-plotted by Alan Moore, written by Peter Hogan, and illustrated by Yanick Paquette (pencils) and Karl Story (inks). The old Nedor characters have never been better presented.

There are some changes in the characters, to be sure. The Black Terror is now a cyber ghost of his former self. "Doc" Strange is now "Tom" Strange (in legal deference to the Marvel Comics sorcerer, but also as a nod to Tom Strong, his doppelganger). The Fighting Yank's daughter now wears the tri-cornered hat and colonial era cloak, while American Crusader, Liberator, Pyroman, Miss Masque and Woman-in-Red, among others, fight on as before—with just a few updates to costumes and powers.

The heroes are grouped together in a super team known as S.M.A.S.H. They're quite reminiscent of the Justice Society, especially since these are characters with an acknowledged Golden Age history, kept young and vital by "magic spells and suspended animation." But the series is quite distinct from the JSA ongoing series. The story arcs are self-contained; the focus is on fewer characters; there's a refreshing lack of universe-wide continuity and baggage.

I highly recommend *Terra Obscura* to anyone with a fondness for Golden Age characters and sensibilities who also enjoys good, contemporary comics storytelling.

Gerry Desrosiers
Berryville, VA

Thanks for the update, Gerry! I'm sure that Will Murray and many of our other readers will want to check out these Golden Age revivals.

RC

Numerology

Got *CMB* #113 at the store. I'm sure you know to your great joy that the cover says it's number 112 for some reason. Is that one hell of a typo or what??? I can just imagine the confusion it may cause. You have my sympathies, which sadly will help not a whit! Yours as always,

Pete Von Sholly
Sunland, CA

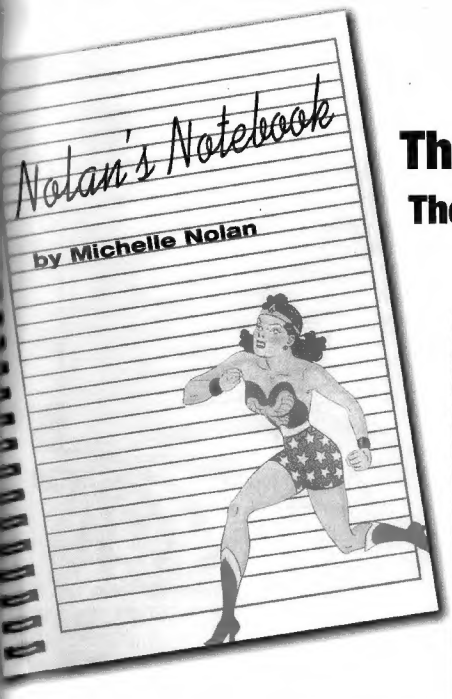
You are correct, sir! (As Ed McMahon used to say to Johnny Carson.) We do take great pride in our proof-reading here at CBM*, with everything being proofed by both myself and Angie at least twice. So why didn't we catch this egregious error on the front cover? I guess our eyes lied to us! Yes, we caught a lot of flak about the mistake, both from readers and from the home office. It just goes to prove that nobody's perfect, not even—us! (Sob!)*

RC

I had to work tons of overtime and hadn't had the chance to pick up my favorite comic books at A1 Comics and today the overtime ended and I zipped up the freeway and entered my favorite comic book store. As I entered the A1 Comics Stargate to a multitude of realities, the first thing I saw was *Comic Book Marketplace* June 2004 #112 issue on the shelves. I was so delighted to get your publication home and read about an obscure little hero named Cosmo the Merry Martian. A character that I never knew existed, but with your publication I find out all kinds of historical references to comic books that I never knew about.

It was a delight to see all of the different types of UFO comic books that were out there, especially during the time of UFO hysteria when people were seeing all kinds of things in the sky. When I was a kid, I made it a point to always read Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* and to see Shmoo make his appearance in your magazine was absolutely delightful.

If people ever complain that there is not enough variety of comic books out there that cover all genres, then they must be going to the wrong comic book stores. Some comic book stores in Sacramento only carry comic books by Marvel, DC, Image and Dark Horse
[continued on page 69]



There She Goes, Miss America

The long run of a little-known title

In 1958, three of the last comic book titles with ties to the Golden Age and the World War II era quietly disappeared from the stands.

DC's *Buzzy*, one of the first and best of the Archie knockoffs, ended a 14-year run with #77, which was the only issue published in 1958. Buzzy, though, was essentially finished in 1957 with #76 (Oct 1957). Dell's *Red Ryder* rode into the Four Color sunset with #916 (Jul 1958), though the final regular issue was #151 (Apr-Jun 1957).

But Marvel's *Miss America* was a real honey of a comic book until the end. The final issue of the long-running teen humor title, which appeared monthly or bi-monthly for 14 years, was #93 (Nov 1958). It was, however, actually the 126th issue. *Miss America*, in fact, is probably the most ignored and least known comic book of all those that reached the 100-issue mark in the 1940s and '50s.

Miss America might well have lasted longer had not the title's star, Patsy Walker, also continued to appear in her own title and the *Patsy & Hedy* book. By the end of 1958—the first full year in which implosion victim Marvel was limited to publishing eight titles a month (16 bi-monthly titles) in a distribution agreement with DC—*Miss America* became expendable. Instead, Editor Stan Lee decided to augment his line of science fiction/fantasy titles by publishing the first issues of *Tales of Suspense* and *Tales to Astonish*, both dated January 1959, and one of them replaced *Miss America* on the limited publishing docket.

First issue of **Miss America** (1944).

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Since Patsy Walker and her crown continued to represent one-eighth of Marvel's entire line with two comic books in 1959, it's doubtful if too many readers missed the *Miss America* title. In 1959, no other Marvel character appeared in more than one title.

At the time of *Miss America*'s demise, though, it was Marvel's longest-running title. *Patsy Walker* #1 and *Millie the Model* #1 appeared, in effect, as one-shots in 1945 before their second issues appeared in 1946. By the end of 1945, though, there had already been 15 issues of *Miss America*.

Miss AMERICA
AS OUR HIGH FLYING, ZOOMING HEROINE FOIL AN INSIDIOUS PLOT HATCHED OUT OF THE EVIL BRAIN OF A MURDEROUS MASTER MIND?? WILL BLAZING COURAGE AND RESOURCEFULNESS WIN OUT AGAINST THESE TERRIFIC ODDS AS—
MISS AMERICA Battles BARON SHINTO THE GOUGER!

Splash page to first story from **Miss America** #1 (1944).

Miss America had one of the most unusual histories of any comic book published in the first 25 years of the modern industry. *Miss America* may well have evolved, in fact, into one of the biggest money makers of the post-war period—almost surely the most profitable comic to which few future collectors rarely paid any attention.

Miss America was actually several different comic books over its 14-year existence. It began as a unique challenge to *Wonder Woman*—for one issue, an undated 1944 one-shot. Chances are this issue came out sometime in the spring or summer, about the time *Wonder Woman* #9 (Summer 1944) or #10 (Fall 1944) was published.

Other than *Miss Fury*, a non-super powered character who staggered through eight issues over the 1942-45 period from Marvel/Timely, the fully super-charged and high-flying *Miss America* was the only costumed heroine other than *Wonder Woman* to receive her own title by the end of 1944, albeit for only one issue.

Miss America first appeared in *Marvel Mystery* #49 (Nov 1943) as ever-derivative Marvel's answer to DC's *Wonder Woman* and Fawcett's *Mary Marvel*, who became the undisputed No. 1 and No. 2 heroines of the Golden Age. In contrast, *Miss America* was never more than a 7-page backup character in *Marvel Mystery* #49-85, lasting a little more than four years, along with being a member of the short-lived All Winners Squad in *All Winners* #19 and 21 in 1946-47.

Though *Mary Marvel* beat *Miss America* to the stands by almost a year as an anthology character in *Wow Comics*, Fawcett didn't publish *Mary Marvel* #1 until December 1945—more than a year after the undated *Miss America* #1.

In an era when Golden Age publishers often did not trumpet their first issues, the first issue of *Miss America* appeared with "No. 1" in a prominent yellow circle on the cover. There were *Miss America* epics of 17, 15 and 12 pages, making this first issue a real prize. There were also two pages of *Miss America* pinups—for "country wear" and "town wear"—starring a very much non-costumed version of our heroine. Now that was a super heroine first!

And speaking of prizes, in *Miss America* #1 Timely offered the astonishing prize of $25 to the reader who provided the best story ideas for future issues. Considering an inflation factor of at least ten to one since 1944 that would be a prize equal to $250 or more today! Or, look at it this way: the lucky lass or lad who won that prize could buy 250 new comic books with it!

Regardless of the response, though, Timely publisher Martin Goodwin—or someone on his staff—must have figured out that *Miss America* would be a lot more profitable as a knockoff of the hugely successful *Calling All Girls* from *Parents* magazine than as an imitation of *Wonder Woman*. Beginning with *Miss America* #2 (Nov 1944), the title began appearing monthly as a girls' magazine simply bulging with advertisements.

Miss America #2 through #5 (Feb 1945), edited by Bessie Little, were an odd hybrid of heroics, hijinks and high fashion for teenage girls. These four marvelous period pieces all rank in the

NO. THREE
EAT and SLAT
– Ed Wheelan's FAMOUS FOOLS.
ISN'T IT PRETTY RUGGED BEING ON THE FOOTBALL TEAM?
NO– ONLY WHEN THE TEAM IS ON ME!!
ALSO "COMICS" McCORMICK VERSUS SUPER-ROBOT

As most of you already know, *Russ Cochran's Comic Art Auction* was the vehicle chosen by Bill Gaines when he was ready to start selling the original artwork for his ground-breaking New Trend EC comics. Following that, the New Direction artwork and some of the Pre-Trend artwork was also sold through this same auction venue. We are now continuing that sale by starting to offer, in the next issue, original artwork from Pre-Trend titles *Fat and Slat* and *Picture Stories from Science*.

PEANUTS
by Schulz
AH! A PERFECT DAY!
ALL RIGHT, RISE AN' SHINE! IT'S RABBIT-CHASING TIME!!
OH, GOOD GRIEF!
THE SNOW IS FRESH AND THE AIR IS CLEAR...I PREDICT WE'LL SEE LOTS OF GAME!
HOW CAN YOU CHASE RABBITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?
WE'LL START HERE...THIS IS A BIG FIELD, AND YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP THE SCENT WITHOUT
WAKE UP!
OKAY! HERE WE GO!!
SNIF SNIF SNIF SNIF
SNIF SNIF SNIF SNIF
I GUESS WERE NOT GOING TO FIND ANY, SNOOPY, BUT AT LEAST WE TRIED..
EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE FAILED IT ALWAYS MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER WHEN YOU KNOW YOU'VE DONE YOUR BEST!
I'D HATE TO DISILLUSION HER, BUT I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT A RABBIT SMELLS LIKE!

In addition, we have three—count 'em—three nice *Peanuts* Sunday originals plus no less than fifteen consecutive *Blondie* dailies from the seminal year 1932.

We will also offer, in *Russ Cochran's Comic Art Auction* #69, some books from Bill Gaines's personal library, including autographed first editions by Ray Bradbury, plus bound volumes containing complete runs of *All-American Comics*, which Bill inherited from his father, M.C. Gaines. Plus lots of other art, much of it offered at no reserve!

If you collect original comic art, you can't afford to miss this one! To receive the next four issues of *Russ Cochran's Comic Art Auction*, send $20 to:

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Miss America #2 (Nov 1944).

scarce-to-rare category now, the Gerber *Photo-Journal*'s all-too-liberal scarcity index of 4s and 5s notwithstanding. Each issue of #2 through #5 included *Miss America* stories, plus the first four Patsy Walker tales and a pleasant smorgasbord of fact and fiction in text, photos and drawings, along with far more ads than the typical comic of the time.

In Patsy Walker's debut tale, kid brother Mickey helps uncover the fact that crooning heart-throb Swoon Strong wears a toupee after rival Hedy Wolf (it wasn't yet spelled Wolfe) snags a date with him. Frank Sinatra, good old Swoon was not!

Timely followed up with an absolutely astonishing offer in *Miss America* #2 of $500—that's right, $500!—for a 250-word essay on the subject of "tomorrow's world." That $500 would be the equivalent of $5,000 today for an essay that would run about six inches in a typical 12-pica newspaper column! That mind boggles!

There was one catch, though. Only teen-agers were eligible for the prize! In fact, the cover blurb said "$1,000 in Prizes for Teen-Agers." That means Timely apparently was willing to give away the price of 10,000 copies of the comic book, and the profits for many times that many. And this was in issue #2!

The contest wording was an intriguing exercise in hype. "It has often been said that TEEN-AGERS are the FORGOTTEN PEOPLE! That's bad thinking because, truly, TEEN-AGERS are the most important people in the world; the reasons are too numerous and obvious to list here. MISS AMERICA wants to remedy this deplorable situation, but she cannot do it without your help! And because MISS AMERICA needs your cooperation to make TOMORROW'S WORLD a better place to live and develop—physically, morally, spiritually and mentally—she is offering the following in CASH PRIZES: $500 for first prize, $250 for second place and $25 for the next 10 prizes.

"Put on your thinking caps! The subject is vital—concerns your future. Write 250 words on 'TOMORROW'S WORLD.' Give it all the serious thought and study and consideration you would to attain the highest mark in your class. Tell us how TOMORROW'S WORLD should be planned today; how, in your opinion, you, today's teen-agers, can become TOMORROW'S useful citizens. What can, should and must be done to give today's teen-agers a place in TOMORROW'S scheme of life?"

Whew and double whew! One can only wonder how many replies Timely received! And how many of them really were from teen-agers!

It's also intriguing to note the appeal to teen-agers. In those days, Timely apparently felt it could market to them even better than younger readers.

My guess is that *Miss America* #2 through 5 didn't sell nearly as well as *Calling All Girls*, which was a huge commercial success for years. But *Miss America* must have greatly improved its sales, because Timely never hesitated to keep it going. In fact, Timely's only other monthly title in 1945 was *Terry-Toons* with Mighty Mouse.

Although *Miss America* herself was destined to last three more years as a backup in *Marvel Mystery Comics*, she oddly disappeared from her own *Miss America* title after #5. Yet by 1946, Timely was boasting on the cover, "The largest selling teen-age magazine...more than a million copies." Perhaps that was a stretch, but there's no doubt that *Miss America* was a top seller, or at least advertisers thought so. *Miss America* remained at least 68 pages through the middle of 1947 and at least one issue—Vol. 4 #5 (Sep 1946)—was a whopping 92 pages for a dime!

The title began about seven years of photo covers with #2 (Nov 1944), which featured a 15-year-old beauty, identified on the title page as Dolores Conlon, in nothing less than a striking red and purple Miss America costume, complete with cape and cap. As far as I know, issue #2 is unique in Golden Age history.

Another issue prized by collectors is Vol. 4 #3 (Jul 1946), featuring a striking 14-year-old Elizabeth Taylor, coming off her huge success in the film *National Velvet* and looking several years older and infinitely more glamorous than any 14-year-old who might have picked up the comic book. That, however, was one of the few issues with an identifiable teen star on the cover—Timely may not have wanted to pay the photo fees.

Before we go on, a word about the bizarre numbering system of *Miss*

America—a system unlike any other Timely or Marvel title.

The first 30 issues of *Miss America* were published in five volumes of six issues each, through Vol. 5 #6 (Apr 1947). For some reason, Volume 6 ran only three issues (May through Jul 1947). Volume 7 then ran 44 issues—that's right 44 issues—from #1 (Aug 1947) through #44 (Mar 1952). Volume 7 was monthly through #33 (Apr 1950), then basically bi-monthly for the rest of its history. Patsy Walker began appearing in two or three stories in each issue beginning in mid-1947. Betty Blair, schoolgirl reporter, appeared in some of the early issues but was long gone by 1947, leaving the comic strips to Patsy and her pals.

After Volume 7 #44, the numbering really gets screwy, as follows: May 1952 (Vol. 7, no number, really #45), followed by July, September and November 1952 and January 1953 (Vol. 1, no number, really #46-49), then Spring 1953 (Vol. 7, #50), followed by April 1953 (Vol. 7, #51) and May 1953 (Vol. 7, #52). The title then began regular numbering with #53 (Jun 1953), with "Patsy Walker" billed as the co-title atop the familiar Miss America logo.

In late 1949 and early 1950, when Timely/Marvel briefly flooded the market with more than 30 romance titles (see *CBM* #114), the company even tried to stress romance in *Miss America* and *Junior Miss*, another teen-oriented title. Both

Patsy Walker
MEET ADORABLE PATSY WALKER... SHE'S NOT THE FIGMENT OF AN AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION. PATSY IS REAL. A TYPICAL TEEN-AGER? SHE'S WHOLESOME. MISCHIEVOUS. SHE'S— WHY, PATSY AND HER FAMILY MIGHT BE YOUR NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR...
MARY WALKER
MICKEY WALKER
STANLEY WALKER
I TELL YOU, MARY, IF WE DON'T BEAT THOSE NAZIS SOON—
HUSH, STAN! PATSY IS IN THE NEXT ROOM DOING HER HOMEWORK AND WE'RE DISTURBING HER!

Patsy Walker's comic book debut in **Miss America** #2 (Nov 1944).

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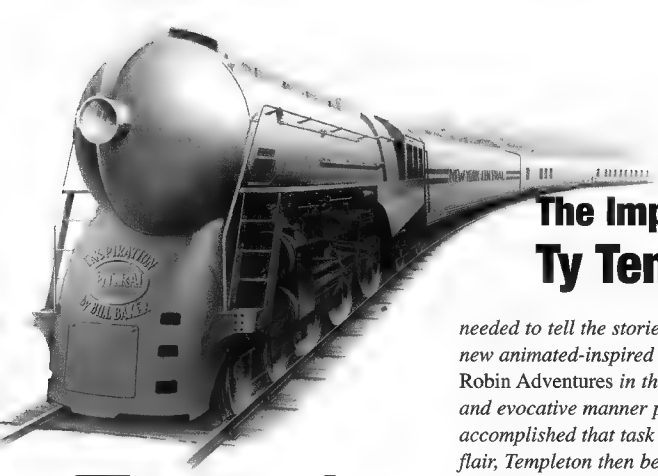
titles carried two romance stories for a few issues until reverting entirely to teen humor.

After the romance experiment ended in 1950, Marvel decided to make *Miss America* a teen anthology title. Volume 7 #35 (Sep 1950), for example, carried stories of Mitzi, Jeanie, Lana and Hedy DeVine as well as Patsy Walker.

It was intriguing how Timely/Marvel definitely tried to market the *Miss America* title to girls throughout its history. In fact, the first page of Volume 7 #12 (Jul 1948) is a house ad for the new *Venus* and *Sun Girl* titles! How often have you seen full-page house ads on the first inside page?

Patsy Walker was a genuine comic book franchise in her day. When Marvel began publishing *Patsy & Her Pals* with #1 (May 1953), the redhead appeared in four regular titles for more than four years! In fact, until the appearance of Superman's Pal *Jimmy Olsen* #1 (Oct 1954), Patsy Walker hit the stands in more regular titles (four) than Superman (three)—unless you count Superboy.

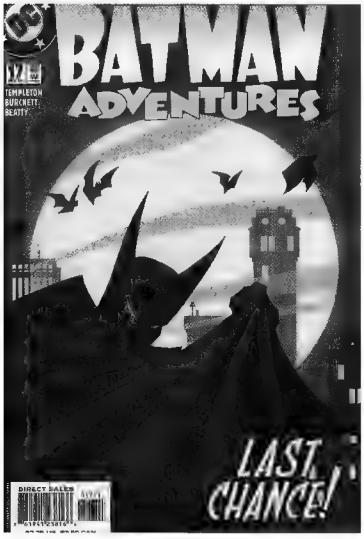
If you, like a number of collectors I know, have tried to amass a representative collection of at least a few issues of every major title, now you know why you shouldn't ignore the beauties of *Miss America*.



The Impossibly Funny Man
Ty Templeton on his influences

For twenty years, now, Ty Templeton has entertained comic readers with a string of stylish, well-wrought and often fall-down-funny projects which began with Stig's Inferno, *first released in1984. That book lead to further assignments with a variety of now-defunct companies in the then-burgeoning black and white publishing revolution, and to his eventual graduation to working for "the Big Two"—most notably in the pages of DC Comics'* Wasteland, *a valiant but sadly doomed effort to revive the weird anthology, and the insanely hilarious and immensely popular* Justice League America *during the mid- to late-eighties.*

Ty then began to reinvent himself as a creator in the early '90s by stripping down his highly detailed and realistic style to the bare bone essentials needed to tell the stories contained in the new animated-inspired Batman and Robin Adventures *in the most effective and evocative manner possible. Having accomplished that task with his usual flair, Templeton then began writing for that and numerous other DC titles, as well as doing just about everything but the printing, promotion and distribution on* Bigg Time, *an original graphic novel published by Vertigo. Ty continues to contribute to various DC books as a writer and artist, and has begun contributing to Bongo's line of* Simpsons*-related titles. He continues to be a dangerously funny man.*



CBM: Are there any particular artists or writers who have influenced you when you were younger?

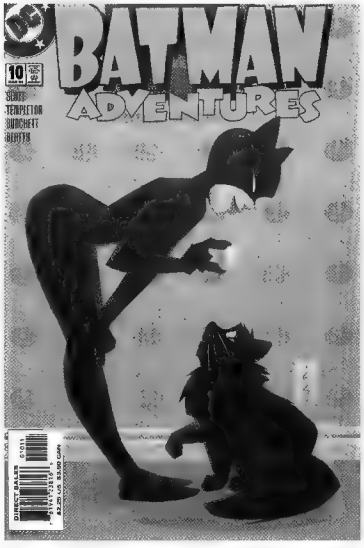
Ty Templeton: Oh, sure. A gazillion. I have to take a deep breath for the list.

My father, primarily. He was a novelist, and wrote a number of movies, as well as being a reporter, and was very successful in those fields. My dad usually had more than one job, as I do, as well. *That's* my first inspiration, which is the idea that you don't have to *settle* on one thing. Whatever hits your head that morning, you go off and do it.

CBM: I didn't know that. Could you tell us a little more about him?

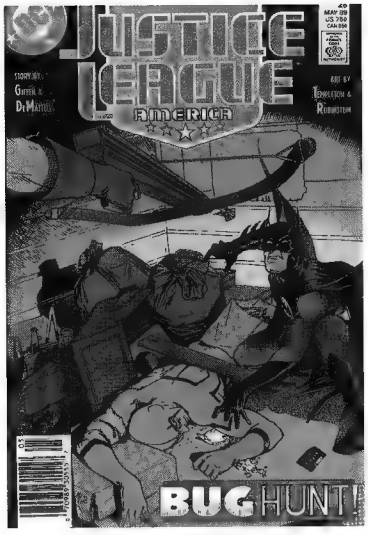
Templeton: Sure. My father, Charles B. Templeton (you can find his web bio at http://www.templetons.com/brad/cbt.html), wrote the screenplay for only two films which were produced, *The Kidnapping of the President* (starring Bill Shatner!) and a made for TV movie in Canada which I believe was called *How to Murder Your Wife* but is not related to the Terry Thomas movie of the same name made in Britain in the Sixties. He wrote a half dozen more screenplays which were not produced.

He was also far more than a reporter, since he anchored and ran the news department of a Canadian TV network news broadcast for years, as well as being editor of both the *Toronto Daily Star* and *MacLeans* magazine (the Canadian equivalent of *Time* or *Newsweek*) for brief periods. He also anchored and managed the news department of CKEY radio and CFRB radio in Canada. He was also a nationally famous evangelist who created the Youth for Christ ministry with his partner, Billy Graham, as well as a candidate for Premier of the province of Ontario (a position he did not win), an inventor, and a syndicated cartoonist. I have no idea why I relegated his career to "reporter" and "screenwriter" earlier when the reality of my father was a far more complex story than that.



CBM: Well, not that you'd need more inspiration than that, but who else might have had some kind influence your life and work?

Templeton: Secondly, I'm probably



going to give The Beatles a big credit, for getting me through my childhood. Then you have to give Douglas Adams, and Monty Python, and George Carlin, and Richard Pryor. And Harvey Kurtzman is a huuuuuge influence on me. I think I'm going to try to have Harvey adopt me, even though he's now been dead for ten years. [General laughter]

CBM: What about Harvey and his work inspired you?

Templeton: I think Harvey's work.... You know, it's almost unfair, [but] I always tend to think of everything that came out of *Mad* magazine, the first 28 issues, as all Harvey, even though he *clearly* collaborated with people. So, because this is a magazine interview, I don't want anyone to get the impression that I don't give John Severin and Wally Wood and Jack Davis all the props in the world for working with Harvey, but it was *still* all his stuff—because he wrote and laid it out.

I think some of Harvey's comics are *literally* perfect. I think you *can't* make them better. You read them, and they're funny when they need to be, they're frightening when they need to be, they're touching when they need to be. This is a guy who *utterly* understood the medium; how it times out, how to read. He studied comics almost scientifically, and reproduced them as much as an art form as a *craft*. And I really emphasis *craft*; you can even say I spelled it with italics when I said it. But he ...

God, it almost sounds too effusive, but he made just perfect comics. When you read an issue of *Mad* from 1954, or an issue of *Two Fisted Tales*, you tell me what's not perfect about it. The stories evoke exactly what they intend to. They're funny when they're supposed to be, scary when they're supposed to be. Have you ever read "Corpse on the Imjin"?

CBM: Oh, yeah, but years ago; too long ago, now that you mention it.

Templeton: Yeah. I've read that maybe twenty times in my lifetime, but the first time I read it, it stuck with me so much that I could close my eyes and picture every panel of that tale. The scene of the man eating lunch by the side of the river, and watching the bits of debris floating down river. And then he starts to notice that they're bits of a vehicle, and then he sees the body floating by. That's just *so* evocative. I feel that I've sat on the side of a river in Korea, and eaten a meal with this guy! Harvey's ability to put you in that place, and bring it all home to you, was second to none in this business—before or since.

Plus, he was just funny. If you've ever read "Superduperman" or "Batboy and Ruben" or any of the stuff he did with Will Elder, it's just funny.

Yeah, Harvey Kurtzman, my dad, The Beatles, and all the great stand up comics of the '70s is a good list of my inspirations.

BEFORE I LEFT THE CHOCOLATE MERCHANTS, DR. MIGHTY SWEET HAD SOME VERY INTERESTING DATA TO SHARE WITH ME ABOUT MY RECENT "BORN AGAIN" EXPERIENCE...
BECAUSE I HAD ALREADY DIED, I COULD NO LONGER TASTE DEATH, BEEN THERE, DONE THAT...
TECHNICALLY, I'M NOT EVEN SLUGGAN ANYMORE... THE OLD "ME" HAS PASSED AWAY. THE NEW "ME" IS SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER...
IT SEEMS THAT MY RECONSTRUCTION HAS ALLOWED ME TO BECOME A CONDUIT FOR THE VERY CREATIVE ENERGIES OF GOD HIMSELF...
ANTI-MATTER PLASMA CANNONS. STYLISH!

CBM Conversation

Auteurs in the Comics

John Benson and Russ Cochran

John Benson is a friend of mine who has helped me put together the annotations for many of my EC Library sets. As a matter of fact, at this very moment he is working on the annotations for the forthcoming Picto-Fiction set in the EC Library. John is also responsible for producing what is perhaps the premier EC comics fanzine, Squa Tront.

John's knowledge of comics and films is extensive and his scholarly insights into these fields are generally right on the button. I respect John, especially in the area of talking about EC comics.

So recently I called John and drew him into the following conversation:

Russ Cochran: I could not find the word "auteur" in my big fat Webster's Dictionary, which is six inches thick, but I did find it in a dictionary on the Internet. An auteur is a filmmaker, usually a director, who exercises creative control over his or her work, and has a strong personal style. Woody Allen is an auteur: he writes most of his movies, he casts them, he directs them, he edits them. So according to the dictionary definition it applies only to film. But I want to extend that definition to apply to comic art and I'd like to discuss the auteurs of comic art. And I especially want to have your comments about Will Eisner, Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman, Carl Barks, George Carlson and any others that you can think of.

John Benson: Well, let's see–you left out Walt Kelly and Jack Cole. And there are a few others. Basil Wolverton. You're talking prior to 1955, right?

Cochran: Yes, generally.

Benson: That makes it a lot easier to talk about.

Cochran: Robert Crumb, of course.

Benson: Well, he's after 1955. After '55 you have a lot of major people like Justin Green, Art Spiegelman, any number of them.

Cochran: In newspaper comics, of course, you have George Herriman's wonderful *Krazy Kat*, which seemed to spring entirely from his mind. It was visual poetry, if there is such a thing. And Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* and Gary Larson's *The Far Side* come to mind, too. But mostly I want to talk about the auteurs of comic books.

For example, when Feldstein wrote and laid out a story he favored words, and he gave the boards to the artist to draw pictures in the little spaces that he'd left. So in Feldstein's world the word was preeminent. And I have even seen Feldstein interviewed and he said that you can get the story without even looking at the pictures. The pictures were important, of course, but always secondary to the words, it seems to me.

Benson: He said that a number of times, but in later years he said it without endorsing it as the proper way to do it, or even the way that he himself should have done it. That's just the way he did do it. There have been times when he said he wasn't sure that he was right in doing that.

Cochran: But when Feldstein sat down to do the pencil and inking on a Feldstein story it was really no different than if he had handed it over to Graham Ingels or Jack Davis or somebody else.

Benson: I think I have to qualify that, because if you go back to the earlier stories that he illustrated himself, you find that they are somewhat more pictorial in nature—that he was writing for his art a little more. I think if you read most of his comments about comic-book writing, he's not talking about writing for himself. He's talking about what he did for most of his career, or at least for that portion of his career that he is famous for, when he wrote for other artists.

Cochran: Right. And I would like to contrast that with Kurtzman, who wrote using fewer words and told his story in a more visual way. And with Kurtzman's stories in general it's not possible to read them and understand them without the pictures.

Benson: I'm not sure I agree with that. You could get the gist of many of his stories from the words alone. He certainly used fewer words than Feldstein, but just about everybody who ever did comics used fewer words than Feldstein. He often had a lot of words in there. But what he did was he integrated the words with the pictures in a unique way.

Cochran: Like he had a sound effect going across three panels, tying them together.

Benson: You could take Kurtzman's words off the stories and print them somewhere else and if you read them you could say, "Oh, these were written by Kurtzman." Actually, you could do that with Feldstein, too, since he had a very idiosyncratic writing style. But I'm not sure that Feldstein's was such a conscious style. Everybody has a writing style, but Kurtzman was very conscious.

Cochran: Well, you know Feldstein was a great admirer of Ray Bradbury and I think Feldstein liked to embroider with lots of words like Bradbury did and he liked words that were pictorial.

A MONTH WENT BY! THEN TWO MONTHS! DOCTOR ARNOLD MANNING REMAINED IN THE SAME CONDITION! THEN, ONE DAY, THE HOSPITAL SUMMONED DOCTOR LESTER JEROME...
YESTERDAY, DOCTOR MANNING REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS! WE X-RAYED AND FOUND THAT HIS CEREBRAL TUMOR HAS ALMOST ENTIRELY DISAPPEARED! HIS HEART STILL DOES NOT BEAT! HE ASKED FOR YOU! HE IS IN TERRIFIC PAIN!
GOOD! TAKE ME TO HIM!
DOCTOR LESTER JEROME SMILED AT THE WRITHING ARNOLD MANNING...
HELP... ME... LESTER! THE... PAIN... MY... HEART! DO... SOMETHING! THEY... TELL ME... THAT... BY ALL... MEDICAL STANDARDS... I AM... DEAD!
YES, ARNOLD! YOU'VE BEEN DEAD FOR ALMOST THREE MONTHS! I'VE KEPT YOU FROM DECAYING THROUGH HYPNOSIS! YOUR TUMOR IS GONE, TOO! YOU SEE... I COULD HAVE SAVED LAURIE... I... WHAT... THE...
DOCTOR LESTER JEROME HAD UTTERED THE WORD 'LAURIE'... THE WORD THAT WOULD RELEASE ARNOLD MANNING FROM HIS HYPNOTIC TRANCE! AS THE GATHERED DOCTORS WATCHED, HORRIFIED, ARNOLD FELL BACK LIMPLY ON THE BED! HIS SKIN SHRIVELED, AND TURNED FROM PINK TO BLUE TO A SICKENING BROWN! HIS EYES SUNK DEEP INTO HIS HEAD! THEN THEY BECAME HOLLOW BLACK SOCKETS! THE FLESH... ROTTED AND STINKING... FELL FROM HIS BONES! SOON, THE BED WAS COVERED WITH NOTHING BUT A SEETHING, OOZING MASS OF PUTRID AND DECAYED FLESH...
HEE, HEE! SO ARNOLD FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH HIMSELF! WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIMSELF, ANYWAY! WELL... HOW LONG CAN A DEAD MAN FIGHT OFF DECAY, EH? IT'S BOUND TO WEAR YOU DOWN SOONER OR LATER! OF COURSE WITH ARNOLD IT HAD TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME! TOO BAD ARNOLD DIDN'T LISTEN TO LESTER, ANYWAY! MAYBE HE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE SUCH A MASS OF HIMSELF! 'BYE, NOW! I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THAT PURVEYOR OF FAIRY TALES... THE VAULT-KEEPER!
OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU WANT A PHOTO OF ME IN THE FLESH, READ THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER!

In this horror story illustrated by Graham Ingels, author/editor Al Feldstein uses a lot of words in the captions and word balloons.

Benson: One thing, for example... Kurtzman copyedited to make his captions always have a full line at the end. He made sure his words fit in that physical way. You know, if you go back into the old *Life* magazine, in the classic era, all the captions are copyedited. There would be three complete lines of text under each picture. Somebody worked out the wording and made for sure that happened. Kurtzman did that when he wrote, because he considered the words in a comic to be part of the art.

Cochran: When Kurtzman would write a story for another artist he was very reluctant, I believe, to turn the decision-making for the pictures over to the artist. So Kurtzman would prepare detailed overlays for the art telling the artist what to draw and how big it should be and so on.

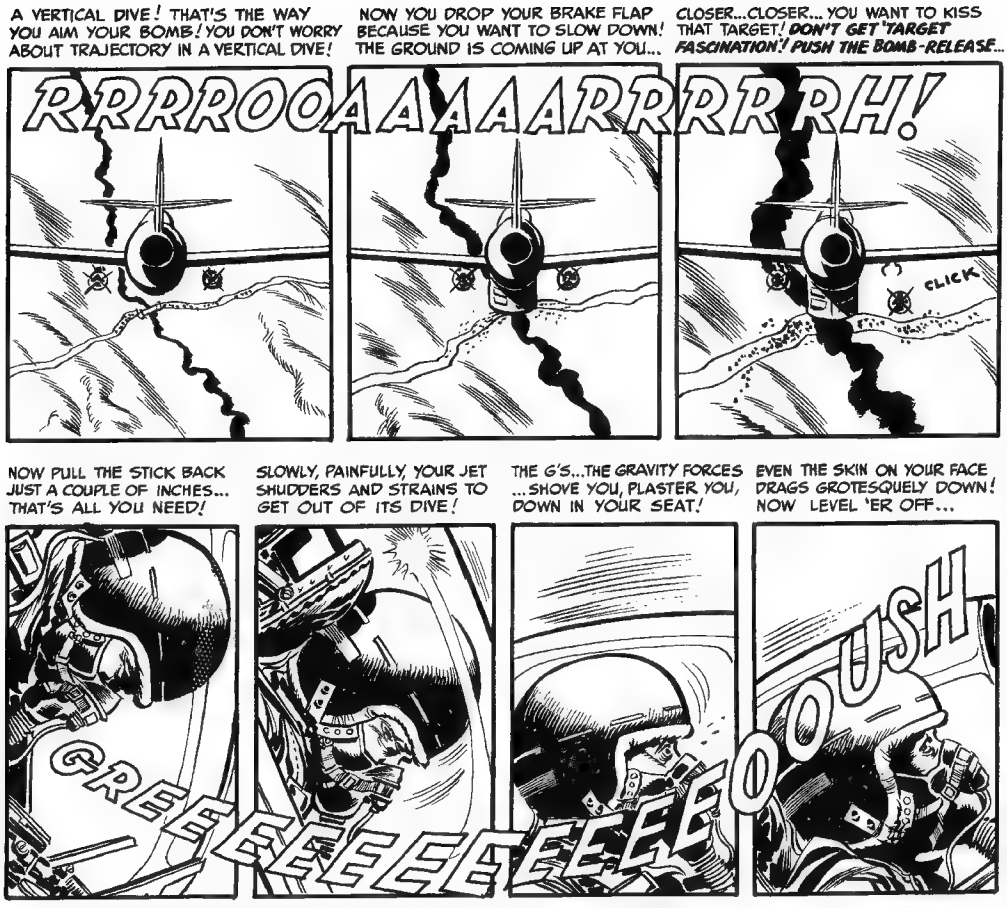
Benson: He almost penciled the stories in a way.

Cochran: Yes, so he exercised much more control over the visuals than Feldstein did. But I guess Feldstein figured that he had done such a complete job of telling the story with the words that the pictures were only secondary.

Benson: Well, actually even Feldstein went a little further than most other comics writers. We're talking about six or eight people here, but in all the rest of the comics in the world, there were hundreds of people that wrote for comics and the typical relationship was a script writer wrote a script with captions, dialogue, and maybe a brief written description of the action, and gave it in to the editor, and the editor gave it to an artist. So you could say that just about all comics were written that way with the writer essentially having to get his point across solely with words.

Cochran: Right, but now we are talking about the specific case of auteurs who don't hand their stuff off to just anybody to be finished.

Benson: Well, that's why I would say.... Your definition of auteur I guess is the true definition, but it is often used more broadly to apply to lots of directors who don't write their own films. You don't have to write your own script in order to be an auteur, it's sufficient if you impose your viewpoint and have some control over it. In that sense you might be able to say that Feldstein was an auteur because he selected his artist carefully for the story. In most cases, he talked to the artist about the story. Also I think you'll find a consistent personal outlook in his work. From that point you could call him an auteur. If we are talking about him as a writer/artist then you have to go back and limit yourself to the stories that he illustrated. I don't think you have to do that with Kurtzman because of the reasons that you outlined. But some people think that Feldstein's


A VERTICAL DIVE! THAT'S THE WAY YOU AIM YOUR BOMB! YOU DON'T WORRY ABOUT TRAJECTORY IN A VERTICAL DIVE!
NOW YOU DROP YOUR BRAKE FLAP BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SLOW DOWN! THE GROUND IS COMING UP AT YOU...
CLOSER...CLOSER... YOU WANT TO KISS THAT TARGET! DON'T GET 'TARGET FASCINATION'! PUSH THE BOMB-RELEASE...
RRRROOAAAAARRRRRRH!
CLICK
NOW PULL THE STICK BACK JUST A COUPLE OF INCHES... THAT'S ALL YOU NEED!
SLOWLY, PAINFULLY, YOUR JET SHUDDERS AND STRAINS TO GET OUT OF ITS DIVE!
THE G'S...THE GRAVITY FORCES ...SHOVE YOU, PLASTER YOU, DOWN IN YOUR SEAT!
EVEN THE SKIN ON YOUR FACE DRAGS GROTESQUELY DOWN! NOW LEVEL 'ER OFF...
GREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
OOUSH

In this EC war story, author/editor Harvey Kurtzman uses a minimum of words in captions, no word balloons, and sound effects which tie the panels together.

early stories that he did for EC were his best stories; the ones he illustrated himself. Bill Spicer thinks so, for example. Or you could go back and look at his romance comics. But to me Feldstein doesn't quite belong in this discussion because he was a guy, as you say, who, for most of the classic work that he's remembered for, only wrote it.

Cochran: Both Feldstein and Carl Barks seem to have a remarkable ability. In the case of Barks, if he was writing a ten-page Donald Duck story for the monthly Walt Disney comic he had the ability to sit down and lay it out in such a way that it came out in ten pages and that he hoped often to have a little cliff-hanger at the end of each right-hand page, so that the reader would be anxious to get to the next page. And Feldstein could do the same. Although I do know that Barks did do roughs of his pages, whereas Feldstein wrote his stories directly on the Strathmore art boards.

Benson: I don't know how uncanny that is. It seems to me that probably most comic writers had to do that. And Kurtzman was even more conscious of the page as the unit than either of those two. Kurtzman strongly thought of the page as a unit. When you're reading a Barks story you're generally not conscious of the page as a unit. Though I'm sure that he did try to compose them that way.

Cochran: And his stories are generally not overly wordy. His stories are mainly carried by the action that we see in the panels. And the dialogue.

Benson: Another thing Barks did that not too many others did—Walt Kelly was certainly another—he developed character extensively through expression. Actually I think Kelly was probably the greatest of that in the *Our Gang* stories. I'd put Kelly high on the "auteur" list for those stories. I guess facial expression was an Eisner tool, too. Eisner used everything, every type of visual and narrative technique, and artistic and writing skill there is to develop a story. He did it all.

Cochran: Was he the greatest of all the auteurs?

Benson: Well, he used more things; he used more techniques to tell his stories. And he also told some great stories. So it depends on what you're looking for. I've always thought of Kurtzman as being the greatest in the four-color era, myself. In terms of his narrative technique he was perhaps more limited than Eisner, but then some people think that Charlie Chaplin is the greatest auteur in the history of film and he didn't use any cinematic techniques. He just stuck a camera up and did things in front of it. I don't know that you have to use

every technique that there is in order to be great. Kurtzman used a lot of them. He was limited you might say in terms of his style. But he used such artistry.

Cochran: Where would you put John Stanley in that mix?

Benson: Well, you know, John Stanley did it all with dialogue, and little events and situations.

Cochran: In characters, like Barks.

Benson: He did it with character, but he developed a character through the dialogue and the situations. You didn't really need to look at his pictures that much. In fact, for most of his stories he just did stick sketches, I think. (Laughs) Somebody else drew a good part of John Stanley's work; was that Irving Tripp? So he had a very limited palette. I mean, John Stanley had the most limited palette of all, you know. That doesn't make his work any less great.

Cochran: So the question is, "What is an auteur?" Why is it important in comics? What other art form can you think of where a person can get the idea, write the story, do the art and be a complete one man show?

Benson: Truly it should be that way. The only other narrative form I can think of that can be created by one person alone is the novel. For narrative forms, that's it. Let's go back to the analogy of movie auteurs. Some of the greatest ones, many of them, didn't write their scripts. Some of them liked to pretend that they did. I just read *The Catastrophe of Success*, about Frank Capra, and Capra is considered one of the great auteurs, but the thrust of the book is that Capra promoted himself as an auteur, but actually his great movies were all written by Robert Riskin.

Cochran: I think Alfred Hitchcock is another similar one that wanted to be thought of as an auteur.

Benson: Well, I think he *is* more of one because if you look at his themes they are consistent, and he had lots of different writers. He didn't have one writer behind him that really developed his style for him, the way Capra did.

Cochran: Style overrode the writing.

Benson: Not only that, but he controlled the stories. I mean, it makes me mad to hear Ernest Lehman, who wrote *North by Northwest*, talk about how he thought it was "his" picture. Hitchcock went to him and said, "I want all these elements in the movie." And it's a Hitchcock movie. Lehman was a subordinate, like the actors…you might as well say that it's Cary Grant's movie if you want because he contributed significantly to its success, too. But you can't mention Lehman any other way than that. And Evan Hunter wrote a foolish little book about how Hitchcock ruined "his" movie, *The Birds*. In the nature of collaboration in comics you can have the same thing. I brought out this book of Dana Dutch's romance stories, and his stories that are illustrated by Matt Baker are much better. Baker understood the characters. You can look at stories and see that they're fleshed out by Baker in a way that they're not when some other artist draws them. So if you have a really skillfully integrated story in pictures and words it's almost impossible to pull it apart and say what makes it a success.

[end of conversation]

And so I wrote to Al Feldstein, and sent him a copy of Bill Baker's interview with Don Rosa, which appears in this issue, and Al replied:

Dear Russ:

I have read with fascination the interview with Don Rosa in which he describes how he starts his stories with the last panel…working backwards from there, panel by panel, until he is about mid-way through the page length…then jumping to the beginning…and somehow, just as the first trans-continental railway was completed, meeting somewhere in the middle.

I totally agree with Don's premise that you have to know the ending of the story before you can write it…and that is certainly how I wrote my stories for EC.

Bill and I would meet each morning, four times a week…he with his "springboards," and me with the knowledge of which artist I would be writing for…and we would attempt to plot a story.

Once we arrived at a general concept of the plot, I would go into my office and write the story directly on the art boards, laying out each page's panel-breakdown, filling and flushing out the story content with character development and incidents.

But I always started my story at the very beginning, keeping in mind how many pages it was going to be in length, and working toward that last panel of that last page by sheer "feel" and "instinct."

I cannot explain how I did it…but I always managed to reach that last page and its final denouement panel successfully…much to even my own amazement.

And I did it for many years…four times a week…with various page-length stories…six or seven or eight, as was called for…choosing the plots and story-content based on who I was writing for, and tailor-making the story to fit each particular artist's style.

I wanted to talk with Al some more about this, but he has just had cataract surgery and will be unavailable for interviews for a few weeks. And while this issue contains great interviews with Will Eisner and Don Rosa, we have not yet paid enough attention to the old Duck Man, Carl Barks, but we do have a dandy article by John Clark, the editor of the new Gemstone line of Disney comics. We plan to cover more of Carl's work in a future issue.

Russ Cochran

THE TOOTH-CHATTERINGLY CAREFUL (AND PROLIFIC)

CARL BARKS

The following is my perspective of the working techniques and methods of the greatest Duck artist to ever live, Carl Barks. I was fortunate enough to have an acquaintance, through my work, with both Carl and his wife Garé during much of the latter years of their lives, an experience I will always be grateful for. I would like to acknowledge Another Rainbow's Carl Barks Library *for the invaluable assistance it provided me in researching this article and helping me "remember." Without the insights of the Library's publisher, Bruce Hamilton, and of its chief historians and writers, Geoffrey Blum and Thomas Andrae, I would not have been able to complete the work you now hold.*

—John Clark

Carl Barks peruses a copy of **The National Geographic**—one of his most frequently-used sources of reference—in this post-retirement photo.

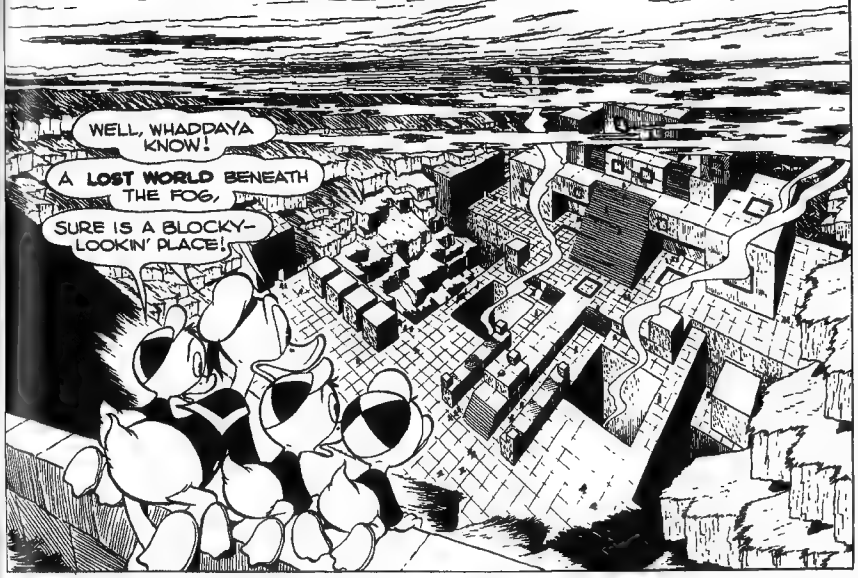
The concept of the "Renaissance Man"—the single creator who is responsible for all aspects of a given project—is not regularly encountered in today's comic book arena. But in the Golden Age of comics, and into the early years of the Silver Age, there were a number of such creators.

Will Eisner, Jack Cole and Harvey Kurtzman are names that come immediately to mind, and each is a legend in the industry. But there is perhaps no legend—no Renaissance Man—more universally revered and who has influenced and inspired more generations of writers and artists than Carl Barks.

That Barks both wrote and drew 99.9 percent of all of the Disney comics he created ("Pirate Gold" and a few others being exceptions) is not remarkable in itself. What is truly amazing about the Old Duck Man's output is the sheer enormity of it—enough material to fill ten three-volume slipcased sets—and that 100 percent of it is of the highest quality you'll ever find in a comic book. So, how did Barks accomplish such a life-achievement?

In his own words: through diligence and hard work. "I wrote my scripts in pencil. Each page was broken down into panel notations of scene, characters and dialogue," Barks has said. "I started drawing the story with no one's okay but my own.... I virtually

This interior depiction of the castle at Dismal Downs ("The Old Castle's Secret") was inspired by a drawing by Norman W. Wilkinson of the Great Hall of Winchester Castle, which Barks found in the July 1947 issue of the **Geographic**.



Barks treated readers to this breathtaking first glimpse of Plain Awful ("Lost in the Andes") after researching the **Geographic** for examples of Peruvian architecture. He complained in a 1983 interview that a neighbor kept interrupting him while he was trying to compose this particular panel, so he was never completely satisfied with the way the perspective turned out.

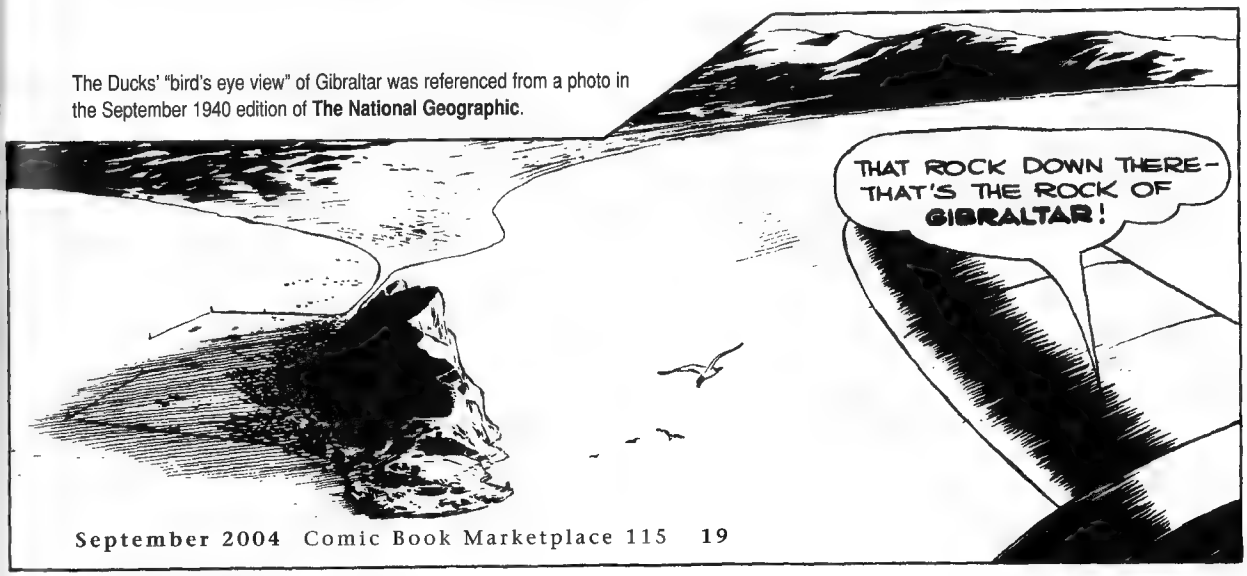
had no trouble with the editors, because I was tooth-chatteringly careful about what I produced." Barks has commented in more than one interview that his work methods included writing and rewriting the rough draft, then writing and rewriting the script, checking continually for plot flaws and omissions in logic. He would often break his scripts down into individual thumbnail panel layouts and then tape the panels around his studio in order to check for story flow and to ensure each story was a page-turner.

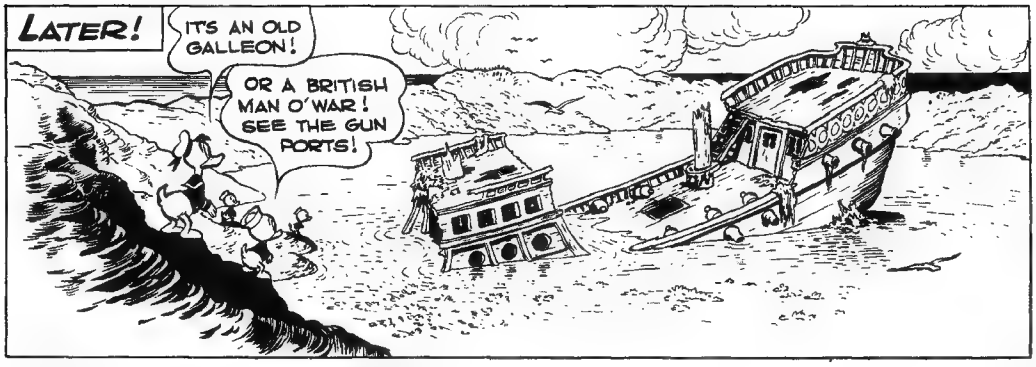
Barks made sure the reader was compelled to stay with a story through its completion by meticulously orchestrating his page layouts so that each right-hand page ended with a mini-cliffhanger or an unresolved question. In so doing, he maintained, his readers were motivated to turn each page in order to arrive at a satisfactory resolution.

But mini-cliffhangers alone would never have gained Barks the legendary status he has achieved and the bedrock for his popularity must reside in the caliber of his stories and the attention to detail and accuracy he placed in each one, and in his determination to make his output more than ordinary. "My firm resolve in the Duck stories was to keep off the shopworn cops-and-robbers kick that depraves so much of TV and other mediums these days. As a result, my gimmicks have usually dealt with human frailties like greed, pride and arrogance. A kid long ago told me that he liked the stories because he never knew when he picked up the magazine whether Donald was going to be a hero, a villain, a windbag, or a heel."

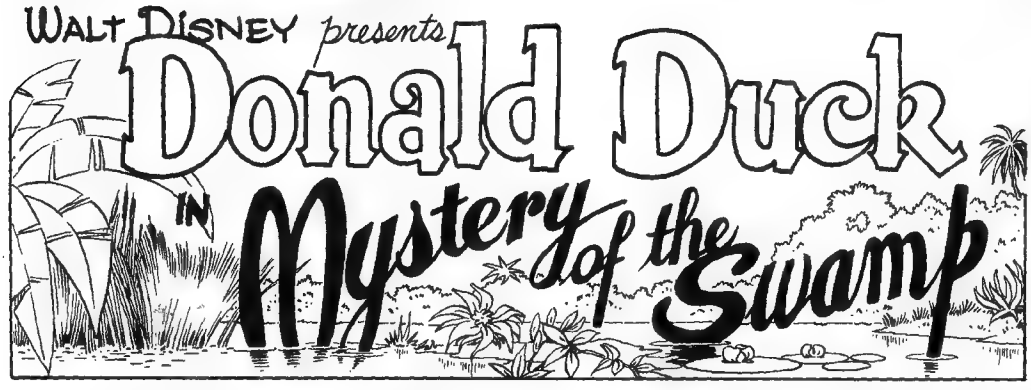
Barks' approach to drawing the stories was similarly meticulous. He worked on paper that was approximately two and a quarter times the size of the printed page. Unlike many cartoonists who pencil out roughs on layout paper and then transfer them to the finished page, Barks chose to do his layouts in blue pencil directly on the final paper and then ink the drawings. Barks started with the first page and drew sequentially through to the last page, without jumping around to "favorite scenes," as many do. Barks drew everything—including the lettering—himself until about 1953. After that he had an assistant, his wife Garé Barks. "During most of the last dozen years, she inked the dialogue, drew backgrounds such as countless vats of diamonds and bins of money, and

The Ducks' "bird's eye view" of Gibraltar was referenced from a photo in the September 1940 edition of **The National Geographic**.





Barks drew his inspiration for "Ghost of the Grotto" and "Mystery of the Swamp" from articles in the **Geographic** and research in the **Encyclopedia Britannica**.

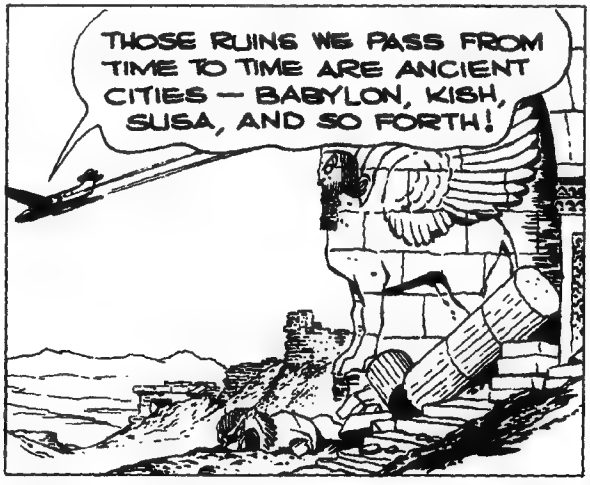


painted in all the solid blacks and shading."

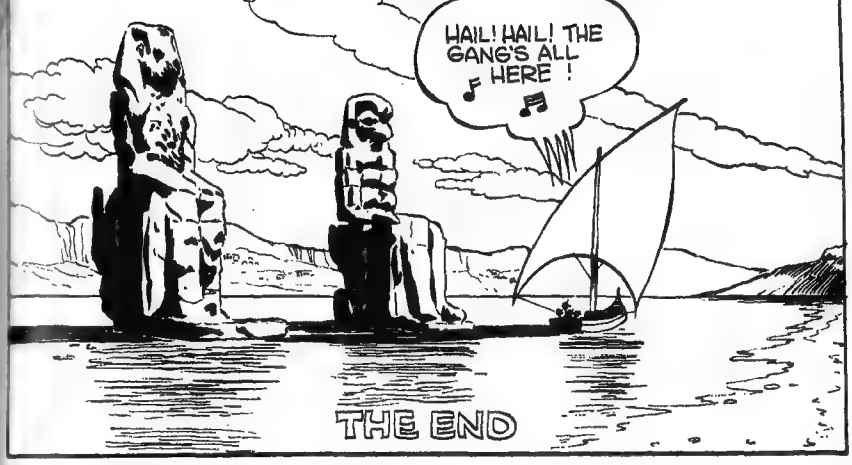
Barks worked with R. Esterbrook flexible nib pens and India ink on various grades of paper that was supplied to him by his employer, Western Publishing. His favorite art board to work on was medium surface Strathmore. "Then along in the middle-fifties the office got on a money-saving kick and began furnishing us artists with a clay-coated import from Germany. The pencil and pen dug into the surface and couldn't be guided with any finesse.... I griped, but the economy of the cheaper paper won out."

Perhaps the Barks stories most acclaimed by fandom are his globe-spanning full-length adventures featuring Uncle Scrooge or Donald. He managed to take the Ducks to the four corners of the Earth—and beyond!—in a fashion that would lead one to believe that Barks himself was an accomplished world traveler. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. "I've traveled nowhere.... The background research evident in my comic book stories was laboriously dug out of my shelves of *National Geographic* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*." He used both references and more to flesh out the background details of his plot locales but relied heavily on the photo-intensive *Geographic* to supply the needed authenticity to his panel art. "It just wouldn't have seemed right to say that the Ducks were in Egypt and then draw a bunch of squiggles across the page [to try to] make the [readers] think that was Egypt."

"Egypt" is a reference to the first epic "travelogue" that Barks wrote and illustrated, "The Mummy's Ring" (*Donald Duck Four Color* #29, 1943), which was the subject of "Up the Nile With Barks," the first learned examination of Barks' work, in 1981, by the late Stephen Eberhart. That treatise dealt exclusively with "The Mummy's Ring," but it inspired Barks scholars Geoffrey Blum and Thomas Andrae to further study Barks' reliance on the *Geographic* and to write, in set one of Another Rainbow's *Carl Barks Library*: "At least five Duck adventures take scenic detail directly from *Geographic* illustrations. The plots of two more were clearly inspired by articles in the magazine." The stories to



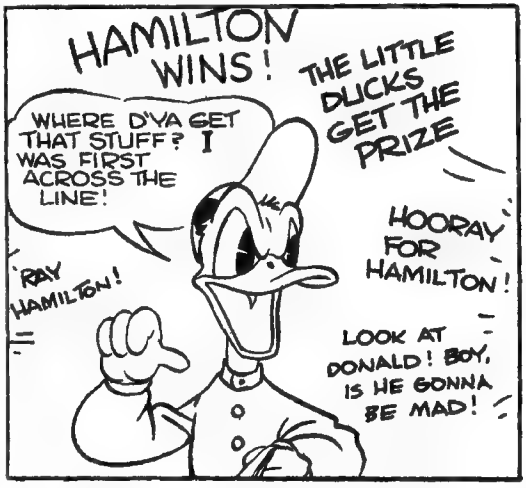
The depictions of architectural ruins in "Ancient Persia" are completely authentic, as is characteristic of Barks' work.

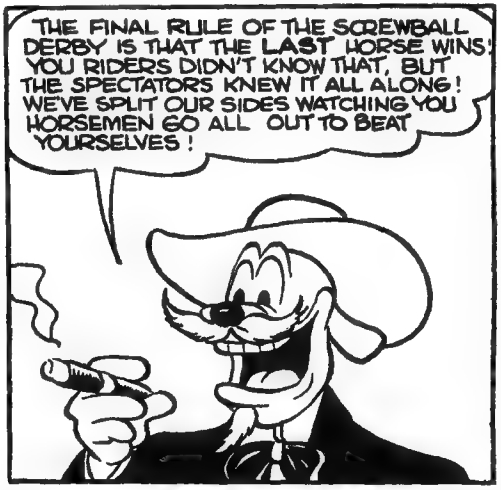


"The Mummy's Ring" contains many examples of mood and authenticity which Barks borrowed from the pages of the **Geographic**, such as his final panel, which could be included in an Egyptian travel guide.

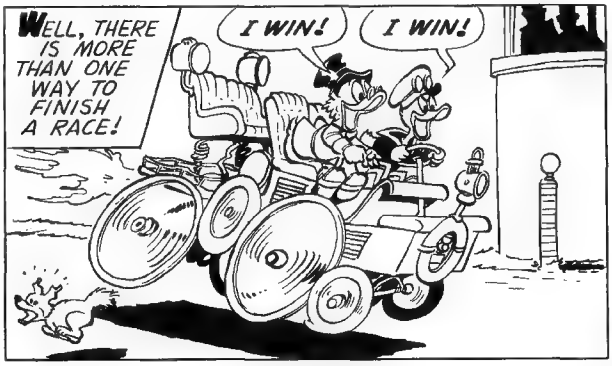
which Blum and Andrae refer, from which Barks drew visual inspiration, are "The Mummy's Ring," along with "Pirate Gold" (*Four Color* #9, 1942), "The Old Castle's Secret" (*Four Color* #189, 1948), "Lost in the Andes" (*Four Color* #223, 1949), and "Ancient Persia" (*Four Color* # 275, 1950), while the stories inspired by the *Geographic* are "Mystery of the Swamp" (*Four Color* #62, 1945) and "Ghost of the Grotto" (*Four Color* #159, 1947). *The National Geographic* acknowledged Barks' use of the periodical after his death, in the June 1, 2002 edition of the magazine ("No Mickey Mouse artist: Donald's illustrator looked to the *Geographic*").

Barks in fact drew his inspiration from much more than just the *Geographic*. As with all men of vision and genius, he remained keenly aware of the world around him and plucked his ideas from personal experience, newspaper and magazine articles, the daily news, movies, television and radio, popular culture, comments from readers, conversations with friends and neighbors and even from his past stories. No less a luminary than Walt Disney once remarked that he had a new audience for his feature films every generation and could consequently recycle everything periodically. Barks took this reasoning to heart and in later years recycled a number of his earlier stories. He once commented that he felt

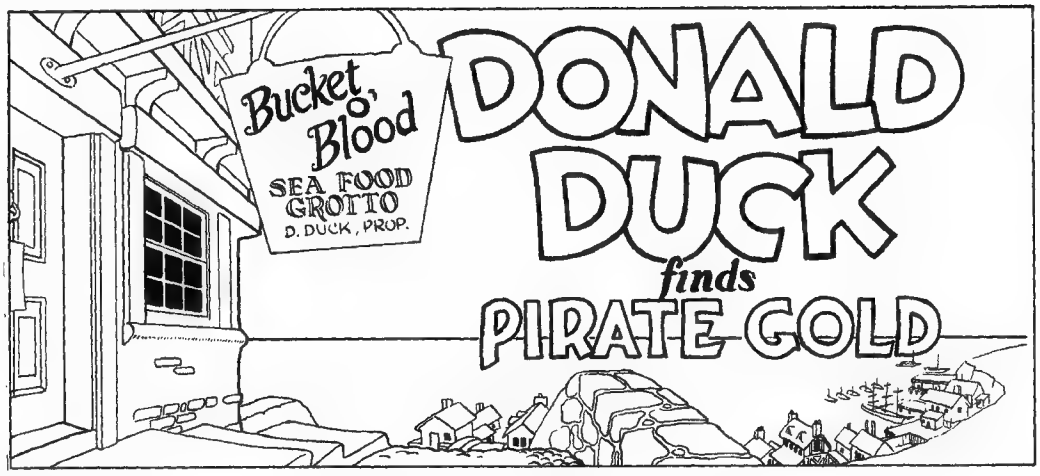

HAMILTON WINS!
THE LITTLE DUCKS GET THE PRIZE
WHERE D'YA GET THAT STUFF? I WAS FIRST ACROSS THE LINE!
HOORAY FOR HAMILTON!
HAMILTON!
LOOK AT DONALD! BOY, IS HE GONNA BE MAD!


THE FINAL RULE OF THE SCREWBALL DERBY IS THAT THE LAST HORSE WINS! YOU RIDERS DIDN'T KNOW THAT, BUT THE SPECTATORS KNEW IT ALL ALONG! WE'VE SPLIT OUR SIDES WATCHING YOU HORSEMEN GO ALL OUT TO BEAT YOURSELVES!

Recycled punch lines: Barks revisited his surprise ending to "The Hard Loser"—that the loser of the race is actually the winner—18 years later in the Uncle Scrooge short story, "The Chugwagon Derby."



NEITHER OF YOU WIN! IN THE CHUGWAGON DERBY THE LAST CAR WINS! IT'S A RULE THAT WAS KNOWN ONLY BY THE SPECTATORS, AND THEY'VE SPLIT THEIR SIDES WATCHING YOU DRIVERS GO ALL OUT TO BEAT YOURSELVES!



The village scene in this opening panel of "Pirate Gold" was based on photos of Sydney Harbor, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

no remorse in doing so, as he was always careful to put a different spin on the reworked stories and at the time, no one envisioned that his past work would be the subject of multiple reprintings and endless discussion. Thus, "The Hard Loser," from *Four Color* #62 became the later story "The Chugwagon Derby" (*Uncle Scrooge* #34, 1961) and "Maharajah Donald" (*March of Comics* #4, 1947) became "The Tuckered Tiger" (*Uncle Scrooge* #9, 1955), among others.

Barks allowed in conversations after his retirement that he recycled some stories because he started running out of fresh new ideas. He would say that the human mind is like a well and like all wells every one eventually runs dry. But he may in fact have sold himself short. His recyclings were always reworked in a clever way that made them into completely new stories, and he truly never seemed at a loss for new ideas.

Years after his retirement, Bruce Hamilton and I visited Barks and his wife Garé at their home in Temecula, California. Shortly after Carl finished expounding upon his inability to write new stories, our conversation turned to a news story about a proposed nuclear power plant and demonstrations that were going on at the building site protesting the plant. Carl commented that he could imagine the protests continuing on after the plant was built and that police would be able spot the demonstrators because they'd glow in the dark. Garé commented, "There's another Donald story!"

TIE HIM TO THE SCALES!
THE MOST EXALTED MAHARAJAH OF BUMPAY WEIGHS EXACTLY 60 POUNDS LESS THAN NOTHING!
WEIGH ME! WEIGH ME! I WANT TO SHOW THE RAJAH THAT HE OWES ME A BUSHEL OF DIAMONDS!
A BUSHEL OF DIAMONDS? HOW CAN THAT BE?
BECAUSE THE SCALES WILL SHOW THAT I WEIGH SIXTY POUNDS LESS THAN NOTHING!

Recycled punch lines: Barks reused the device of having a gas-inflated duck weigh in at less than nothing—first seen in "Maharajah Donald"—eight years later. Note that Scrooge benefited from the situation, whereas Donald did not.

THE MASTER BUILDER

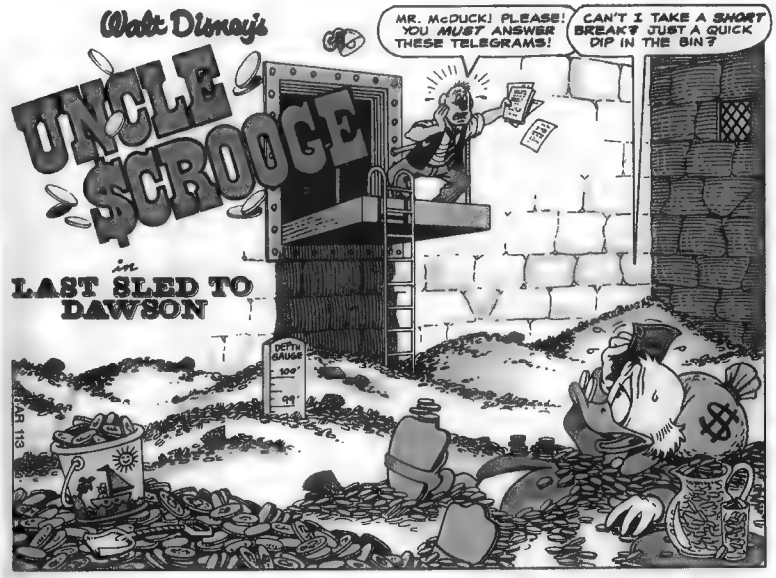
DON ROSA

ON HOW HE CREATES HIS DISNEY DUCK EPICS

an interview conducted by Bill Baker

Over the course of nearly two decades, Don Rosa has firmly established his place in the hearts of Duck fans the world over. And while he's tried his hand at a number of different stories and lengths over the years, he's best known for his well-researched and highly detailed epic tales featuring the treasure-hunting escapades of Uncle Scrooge and his long-suffering employee and traveling companion, Donald.

In the interview below the venerable Duck man describes the long and arduous process which he goes through every time he sets out to document one of those grand adventures, with a few side trips along the way to discuss some of the pitfalls and other perils he faces while doing the work—all of which makes for an epic tale of its own.



Comic Book Marketplace: How do you approach creating a new Duck story?

Don Rosa: I have no idea how other writers, or artists, or those few other writer-artists, do their work because I've never studied how it's done. But, since you're asking me, this is how I do it.

I first send a message—it used to be I'd call, but now it's all email—I'll just email the Editor in Chief over there, in Copenhagen, and say, "Well, what's next? Do you want a gag story? Do you want a thirty page epic?" Sometimes I'll have a preference. Like right now, I've just finished the longest, most boring story that I've ever done. [Laughter] So I'm ready to do just a quick ten pager with a lot of action, silliness, and no complex plot or stuff like that. So I think I'm going to be doing that. But he'll tell me one or the other. He'll say, "A short story," or, "A long story."

And there's not much to say about the short stories. I spend most of the time telling these long, overblown epics. Because if it's just a gag story I'm going to write, they're usually ten, more like fifteen pages, somewhere in between there. And I just have some funny idea, and just kind of build pages around it. Oh, gosh, it's so hard to describe the process…

To somebody just reading how I'm describing creating a comic book story, it probably sounds strange. There are no American comic book stories like these. Well, I guess maybe Archie comics are like these, but I'm not a fan of Archie comics. But, working on a Disney tale is different than creating most comics because each story is so totally self-contained. It doesn't continue from anything, it doesn't continue to anything, and they very rarely refer to any previous story. The story must make complete sense and be completely understandable to a reader who has never read a Donald Duck story before.

So, really, each story has got to start from nothing, build up to some climax in the center, and then have an ending to it that has a punch line. And the ten page stories? They're an art form themselves, I guess. I can do a good one every once in a while, but generally I'd be scared to have the job of doing nothing but ten page stories. That would be as scary for me as doing a daily comic strip. Having to come up with a joke 365 times every year, and each one has to be as good as the one before it, I don't know if I'd have that in me.

I do ten pagers once or twice a year, but I really prefer the long, complicated stories. Those are the ones that I really

enjoy doing. They interest me. They challenge me, most of the time, so it's fascinating for me. And it's the kind that I liked most growing up. It's the Carl Barks adventure stories that I love. I like the ten page gag stories, but I love his long adventure or historical quests, and that sort of thing.

So let's say I'm doing one of these long, overblown epics. Somehow I'll come up with a topic. Possibly some editor in Europe will suggest a topic that he's got on his mind, whether he wants a sequel to a Barks story for some reason. Other past examples have been when Norway was having a National Year of the Book—a pretty good idea, I'd like to see that in America—somebody wanted a story about books. So I decided to do something about the lost Library of Alexandria. Or when the Finns wanted me to do something about their national epic poem, the *Kalevala*. So, on a rare occasion it'll be the publishers someplace who will suggest an idea. And, if not that, then I'll just go to my list of ideas that I've been jotting down for years, and pick the one that strikes me as "It's time to do that idea!" Either treasures I've read about, or situations that would be interesting during a hunt for a great treasure. And the ideas come to me haphazardly. I'll get an idea when I'm watching a movie, or reading a history book.

So what's next? I'll go to the library. Actually, the next thing I usually do is go to my own reference library. And as the idea I'll have is usually about a treasure that's going to be in a certain part of the world, or a certain historical era, I'll go to my *National Geographic* collection that goes back about sixty years. Or I've got these sets and sets of general historical book series. I've lots of different ones, but some of the most useful ones are often *Time-Life* book series. These are nice picture books. They've got lots of capsule histories, and different interesting things. They're light weight, but that's the best way to get started on something like that. And I'll spend several days going through sections in those books, or stacks of *National Geographic*s that I'll dig out using an index, and I'll just start writing down facts—interesting facts, useful facts. And then I will find out about certain promising subjects and go to the public library to continue the research. Usually, I might bring back ten or fifteen books from the library. And then I'll just have all these stacks of magazines and books around me for a couple weeks.

AND I CAN TELL YOU THAT MEMORIES ARE LIKE THESE CHOCOLATES: FROZEN IN TIME, UNCHANGING THROUGH THE DECADES...
...AND STILL JUST AS SWEET AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!

I can't say that I can afford to sit down and read a whole history textbook. All I really do is browse through it, and hope the important things catch my eye. Of course, I'll read certain sections that I need, but it's not like I'm getting paid extra to do these kind of over-complicated stories. [Laughter] This is all something that I just do for my own entertainment, and because this is the way I think the story should be done. It's really a challenge to tell an adventure story, and yet make it totally historically accurate.

But they're not talking ducks; I don't see them that way. I see them as real people. Barks made the characters so lifelike; I grew up thinking of them as real people in a real world. So I set my stories amid true history. It seems like it's really a challenge to write and create—hopefully—an entertaining story, and only use actual facts from history. But I'll fill many pages in a notebook with these facts, knowing that I'll probably only use one-tenth of them when I finally sit back and see what I've got. Well, that's the only way you can do it.

But while I'm doing this research, that's when the idea for the plot usually comes to me. I've told other folks this—and it sounds really corny when I say this; it sounds like I'm a grade school teacher talking to their class—but history

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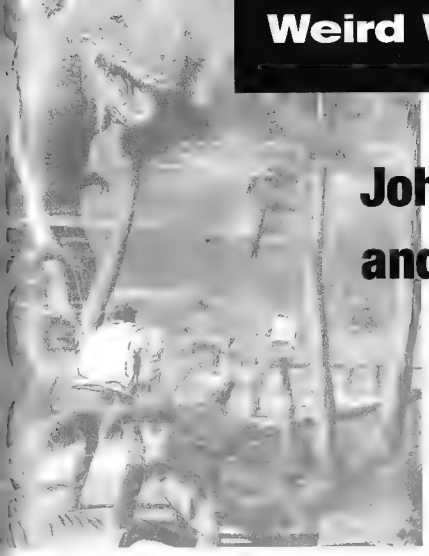


by Pat Calhoun

John Stanley's Giant Horror and Little Horror

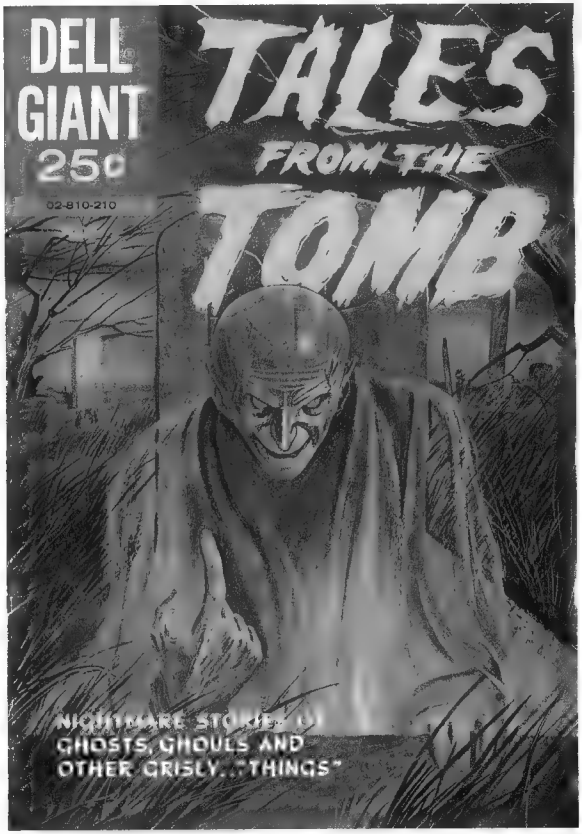
In 1962 Dell published a singularly significant horror comic. They were high from strong sales of their title based on the hit TV show *Twilight Zone*, and soon after its third issue they launched a supernatural fantasy title, *Ghost Stories* (Sep-Nov 1962). At the same time they issued the 25-cent giant one-shot *Tales From the Tomb*. Although the title is something of a homage to EC, Dell's resident super-scribe John Stanley (of *Little Lulu* fame) achieved his own tone, keeping most gore offstage but having enough fantastic images to inspire good graphics. Taking advantage of the extra pages, Stanley adopted a Jamesian (as in *The Turn of the Screw*) leisureliness, leading to the desired elegant and detailed suspense, with a half-dozen 8- to 13-pagers. It wasn't gross, but it was definitely horror and only possible since Dell abjured the censoring Comics Code Authority, relying on their own reputation for good taste.

Even the beckoning ghostly graveyard ghoul on the cover is grisly, painted by pre-Code horror veteran L.B. Cole, who also edited the book. In the opening tale, "Mr. Green Must be Fed," Stanley hits the ground running as a young traveling man spends a night in a rooming house run by a gentle old lady. But the hooked rug by the bed is the dimensional doorway for a monster, leading to a nicely-orchestrated confrontation between boarder and beast where the young man cleverly saves himself by tossing the rug out the window. Then Stanley "pulls the rug out from under him" with a second sharp plot twist. Frank Springer's art shows a sure hand with narrative and character. It's a satisfying 12-pager that sets the pace for a book that holds a unique place in the history of horror comics.

In "Still Life" a vacationing artist paints a huge black tree stump in a circular clearing only to find the locals believe the site is cursed. It all leads up to the final full-page panel—and the artist's testament to the power of black magic. "Crazy Quilt" is also compelling—a 5-pager with nice visual impact in another full-page final panel, vividly drawn by Tony Tallarico. The other stories are all enjoyable enough: the combination of Stanley's distinctive scripts, the longer stories possible in the giant format, and Dell's sidestepping of the Code added up to a book unlike any before or since!

Leonard Cole's savvy editing also helped ensure the quality of this "Stanley Screamer"—83 pages of comics (and a Daisy B-B gun ad on the back cover). The timing was also right: there was a horror revival underway on TV, with shows like *Creature Features* recycling the rich legacy of Universal's classics mixed in with funky fifties fantasy flicks, and on the big screen with the UK's Christopher Lee reprising all the key roles and in the USA with Roger Corman's Poe adaptations (that began with *House of Usher* in 1960).

Three years after *Tales From the Tomb* Stanley returned to horror, this



Tales From the Tomb #1 (1962) John Stanley's quiet brand of horror was saved from the censors who killed the genre in 1955—thanks to Dell's being the one major publisher to reject the Comics Code Authority. The spooky cover is by L.B. Cole.

time via the back door using it as "window dressing" for a humor title. *Melvin Monster* #1 (Apr-Jun 1965) introduced the young monster (a green Tubby Tompkins with a pointed head). We become acquainted with this puzzling protagonist in a cover-to-cover (32-page) novel that takes Melvin from his home in Monsterville and transports him to our world, Human Being Land. The main supporting characters were all Melvin's family throughout the series: Mummy (cloth-wrapped with a bouffant hairdo) and Baddy (looking like Frankenstein's monster), and their pet crocodile Cleopatra (whose goal in life is to munch

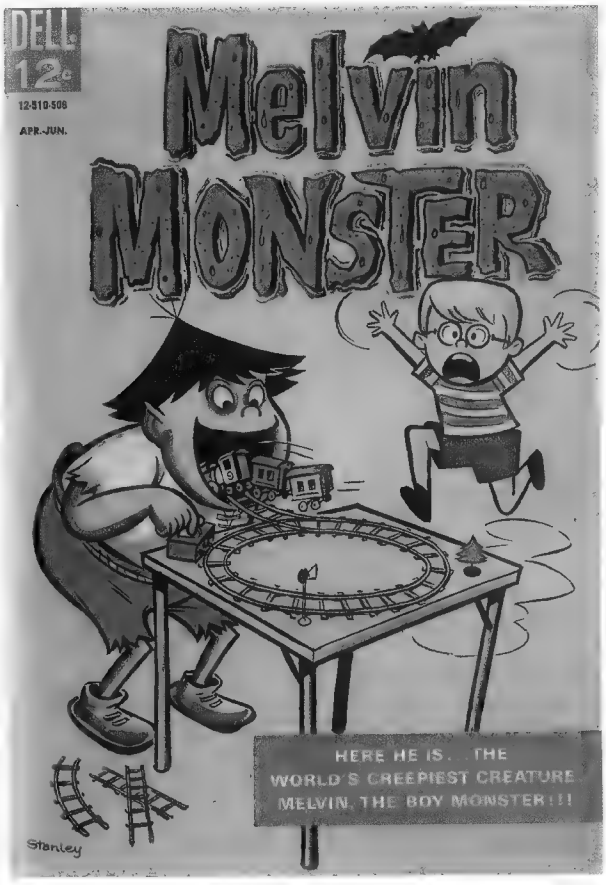
The monster uses an innocent-appearing hooked rug as a portal to plunder in "Mr. Green Must Be Fed." The artist, Frank Springer, came to Dell after a journeyman stint assisting George Wunder on *Terry and the Pirates*. Just for fun compare Lulu in these panels to "Mr. Green." Not only is it a clever idea worth using twice (once for laughs, once for thrills) but it's also one that lends itself to intense imagery. (**Little Lulu** #64, Oct 1953, "The Throw Rug").

Stanley's horror stories don't use many narrative "boxes," allowing the images to tell the tale, as in this full-page finale to "Still Life." Showing such skill in his first horror comic makes it a shame that, save for the inversions of Melvin Monster, it was also his last.

Melvin).

Melvin tries to be a good monster, but something in his blood causes him to act more like a person than a monster. However, the trip to Human Being Land shows that's he's not quite at home here either. It's a charming concept that promises many inventive and enjoyable situations, and the first issue whets one's appetite for more.

Melvin Monster #2 (Jul-Sep 1965) again sends our hero to our world, which seems to be curiously contiguous to Monsterville. This issue also debuts Melvin's female foil, Little Horror, a young seductress who exercises a hypnotic hold over the hapless boy. Little Horror makes us recall Little Itch, the infamous niece of Old Witch Hazel, Lulu's nemesis in the stories she told while babysitting neighbor Alvin in the fondly-remembered series of fantasies that enhanced *Little Lulu* for many years. In fact, it's the gigantic success of Lulu that made Melvin Monster a tough row to hoe. Stanley had already served up two decades of youthful antics that cast a shadow over this attempt at reincarnation. And the comic book world was changing. The *Batman* TV show in 1965 sparked a four-color



Melvin Monster #1 (Apr-Jun 1965) Charles Addams' long-running series of macabre cartoons inspired the *Addams Family* TV show in 1964. Dell created Melvin and his clan in an effort to entice the horror/humor fans that show created.

superhero revival that paved the way for comics to gravitate from magazine racks to specialty shops and from a medium that offered something for everyone to one that catered to "fanboys." And Dell's loss of the Disney contracts in 1962 had ended their domination of the "funny book" market.

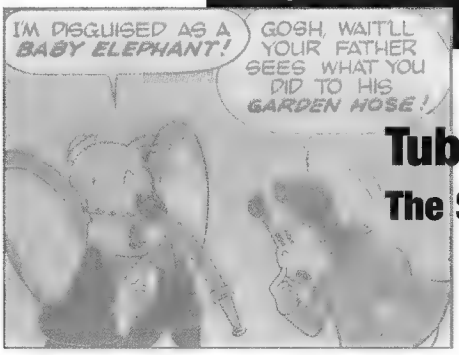
Melvin Monster #3 (Dec 1965) confirmed "guardian demon" Damon and schoolteacher Miss McGargoyle as continuing characters, and Melvin still could have been a contender—despite Lulu's shadow—adding to the cast and exploiting the endless ironies of Monsterville.

After Melvin manages to walk past the girl monster's house while ignoring her calls, he takes one look back to "see the expression on her face"...and thus comes under Little Horror's spell again (**Melvin Monster** #2 Jul-Sep 1965).

Melvin MONSTER
MICE BUSINESS
CHOFF, CHOFF, CHOFF, CHOFF-
TIME TO START SUPPER, I GUESS... MELVIN, GO GET SOMETHING FROM THE STORE ROOM...
WHAT, MUMMY?

The happy family of Mummy, Baddy and Melvin (with Cleopatra the crocodile offstage) in a splash panel from **Melvin Monster** #3 (Dec 1965). Using a bat to dot the "i" in Melvin was a cute touch.

But Dell's interest was waning as comics devolved to (virtually) superheroes only, which had never been their strong suit. So *Melvin Monster* eked out nine sporadic issues with #10 (Oct 1969)—which reprinted #1—marking the end of the run, amid the ruins of Dell's once-mighty comics empire.



by Pat Calhoun

Tubby Transformed:
The Spider Spins Again

Of the many things that made *Little Lulu* a great comic book, the greatest was that writer and penciler John Stanley kept making the strip better and better. Although creator Marge Henderson Buell's single panel gags in the *Saturday Evening Post* were famous enough in the early 1940s, it was Lulu's ad campaigns for Kleenex that really made her a part of pop culture. So when Stanley was asked by the people at Dell to create comic strip stories from the core group of Marge's characters he kept adding to that group, not only with more kids but memorable adults like Kolkutz the butcher and the truant officer Mr. McNabbem.

By the early 1950s he had the neighborhood thoroughly detailed and the strip flourished, filling a monthly magazine with unfailingly hilarious antics. Many "sub-series" were launched, one of the most delightful being Tubby's frequent excursions into pulp mode where he would solve "crimes" by donning a disguise and wading into the fray as "The Spider." Most often the "criminal" was Lulu's dad! Though Popular Publications' classic character was never mentioned directly—other than the tip-off name—at the start of each case Tub would chant, "A spider spins a web to catch his prey." Of course, after his first appearance, his "origin recaps" were usually cut off (at the kneecaps!) by Lulu at the "spider spins" stage.

Based on that, "The Case of the Broken Egg" in *Little Lulu* # 55 (Jan 1953) seems to be the premiere, which is appropriate as the 1953-1954 run is Stanley's peak performance, with every issue featuring at least a couple of classics. And the January 1953 issue still weighs in at 52 pages (soon to slim to 36, counting covers in both cases). The Dell books of that era were all comics, cover to cover, without ads. *Lulu* ran about seven stories per issue in the 52 pagers and five per issue in the 36 pagers. The "Egg" case has Lulu's dad, George Moppet, the victim of the crime this time and not the perpetrator. Mr. Moppet one morning makes the discovery (the gross and gooey way!) of an egg in his shoe. This tale is particularly tense, in that Tub will end up taking the rap if the Spider can't find the real culprit!

In this, and most of the subsequent Spider appearances, Tub's outrageous disguises were meant to emulate one of the pulp Spider's specialties. Tubby added a unique element to the concept in that not only did his disguises seldom obscure his true identity, but often rendered him dysfunctional, as in the case at hand where his character-change consists of putting on a pair(?) of three-eyed glasses with the opacity of their lenses leaving him all but blind! Fortunately, Tub has Lulu for a "seeing-eye girl," and after several setbacks he does indeed solve the mystery of who put the egg in Mr. Moppett's shoe. It's a swell debut!

It was a full five months (#60, Jun 1953) before the second appearance, and "Tub Solves a Case over the Phode" has our hero home with a cold, cracking the case without leaving the house, a la Nero

Little Lulu #55 (Jan 1953) More often than not, Lulu called the shots with Tub—hey, it was her book! Each issue did feature a "Tubby" tale at the end, but the Spider never appeared in these solo flights.

by Pat Calhoun

King of the 'Hood

This bizarre "Dick Tracy villain" self-caricature of John Stanley is part of a **Famous Cartoonists Series** (of 50+ buttons) still available from the original producer at deniskitchen.com (with this one also sold individually!).

Wolfe. The highlight of this minor entry in the series is Tub's keeping faithful to the master of disguise theme by putting a lamp shade on his head while talking through the case with Lulu on the "phode."

But Stanley bounced back the next month (#61) with a crackerjack tale where Tub—in the best pulp tradition—takes on a whole criminal organization in "The Spider and the Secret Six." Poor Lulu takes a creepy message on the phone that claims—regarding her Pop—"the Secret Six has caught up with him at last and his doom is sealed." She calls Tub and as he's "assuming the Spider character" Lulu is convinced this is one time Tub may be outmatched and she asks if they can get more help. At that point Tub, totally transformed, mutters (with superb spirit if shaky zoology), "The Spider is a lone wolf," as he reaches into his pocket for that crime-fighting tool even better than a good disguise—one his mentor put to fast and furious use—his pistol, his piece, his gun; here, of course, his squirt gun. Tub performs some real derring-do in this one, even if it turns out that the Secret Six was Lulu's dad's "gang" name as a kid and the call came from one of the old boys passing through town.

Little Lulu #62 (Aug 1953) offers the third Tub/Spider yarn in a row. Too bad it's another lightweight entry—one can be pretty sure that Tub will figure out who stole the ice cream.

The December ish (#66) featured a yuletide take on "The Spider Spins Again," with our intrepid investigator deducing who broke the ornaments on Lulu's Christmas tree. Tub straps on some stilts to disguise himself as a tall guy, which also helps him hunt evidence at the top of the tree. Tub puts his knowledge of criminal psychology to good use in this one, cadging a confession from the culprit while chatting him up.

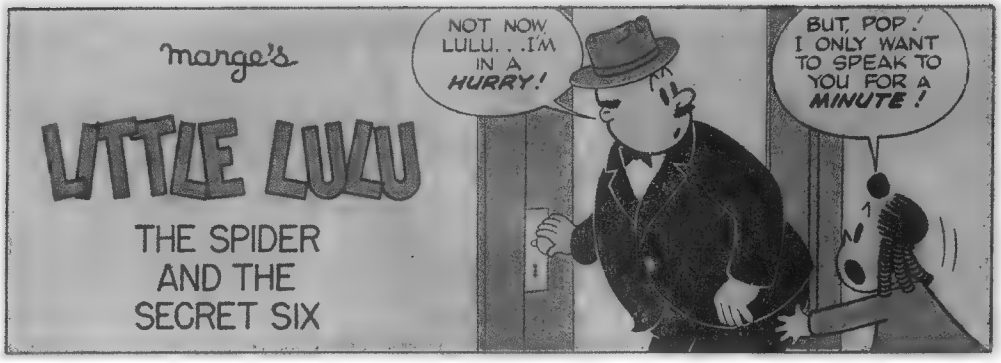
There was quite a crime spree that winter. The Spider was back in the January issue with "The Case of the Disappearing Drums," trapping the crook *[continued on page 30]*

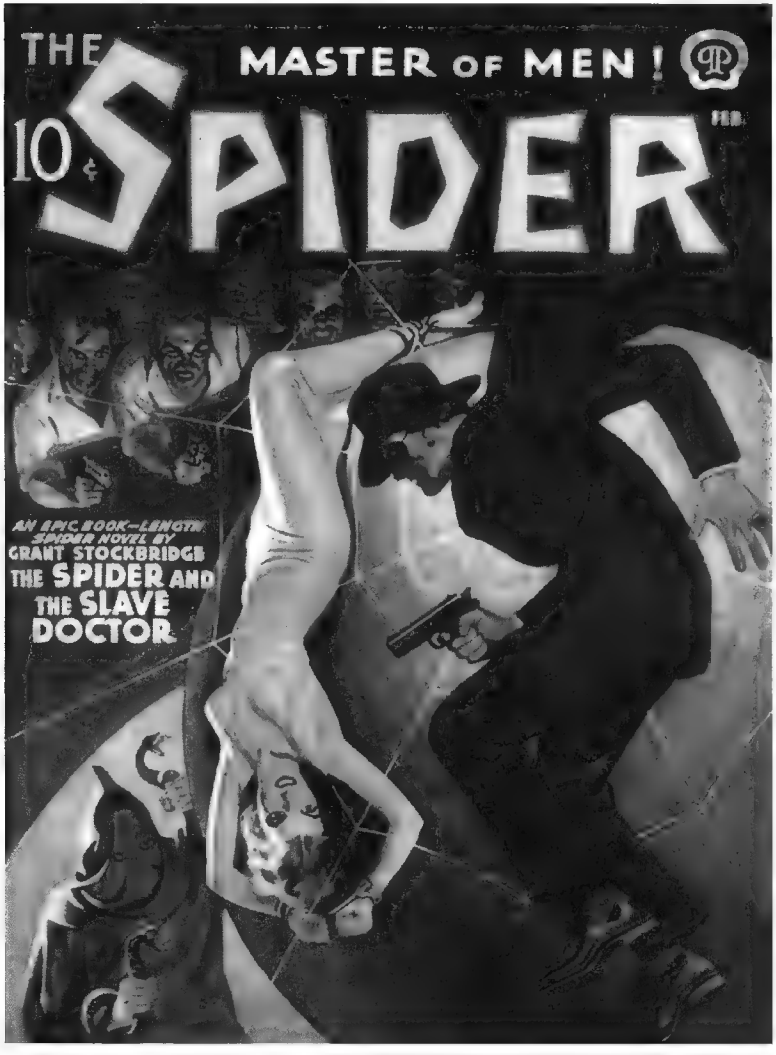
John Stanley was born on March 22, 1914 in New York City and joined the Fleischer Animation Studios in the 1930s. From there he went to work for Disney on Mickey Mouse, including covers and interiors for the *Mickey Mouse Magazine*. In the mid 1940s at Dell, editor Oscar Lebeck assigned Stanley to do the new comic based on the *Saturday Evening Post* panel-gag girl who'd become an icon peddling "Kleenex," Little Lulu. Stanley completely plotted, wrote, penciled and inked the first two issues, *Four Color* #74 (1945) and #97 (1946). Much was accomplished in those first issues in terms of character, pace and atmosphere that served as a blueprint for the strip's future, especially the lead roles of Lulu and Tubby.

Those who have read Lulu do not contest Stanley's right to "auteur" status despite the fact that after the first two issues most of the inking was done by others, much of it by Irving Tripp. Apparently Stanley himself was not a Tripp fan ("I complained constantly trying to get a change of artist but to no avail. It was too static for me.") But many (including this author) love that "static" look of Tripp's, and part of Stanley's dismay might have been having to accept someone—anyone—else's inking, which schedules and Dell demanded. The writing and penciling left such a strong signature on the strip that most diehard fans feel the strip is big enough to qualify Stanley as belonging to that very small group of comics creators who wrote and drew superlatively—with enough still to give Tripp his due. And those who crave "pure" Stanley can console themselves by focusing on the wonderful Stanley penciled-and-inked covers, rife with classic sight gags like Lulu cracking walnuts on a pogo stick or Lulu and Annie playing checkers on the back of Wilbur's plaid jacket (while he's wearing it!).

Stanley's other Dell work, like Melvin Monster in the 1960s, was fine as well (MM might even be "pure" Stanley—conceived/written/penciled/inked), but Lulu (which he worked on until around 1960) is unquestionably his magnum opus. After Stanley left comics he came to adopt a dim view of the field and his Lulu work, "I ceased to enjoy the writing of the strip because it was so hard to tap new ideas. There was only so much you could do with the neighborhood boy/girl format." But the fact that he never got a dime of royalties from the frequent Lulu reprintings was a big factor in any misgivings. And as for exhausting the possibilities of the 'hood, it's understandable overstatement. In his fifteen years writing and penciling *Little Lulu* John Stanley created and lovingly detailed the most realistic neighborhood in comics history. It's a lot like yours—only funnier.

"The Spider and the Secret Six" from **Little Lulu** #61 (Jul 1953). This entry offers the most straightforward suspense and "real" peril of any in the series as Lulu and Tub tackle of group of mysterious adults.



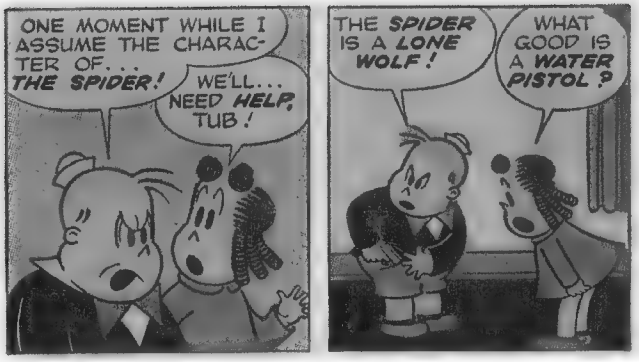


(Mr. M. of course) with a clever ruse. And in #68 (Feb 1954) Tub tackles a case disguised as a baby elephant, or—as Lulu says, "Wait'll your father sees what you did to his garden hose!" Old man Moppett has disappeared after going upstairs for a nap. And it's up to the Spider to "sniff him out" with his big hose, er, nose.

Lulu #69 (Mar 1954) finished off a bravura four-issue run with "The Case of the Faceprint on the Towel." Tub performs as both scientist and sleuth in this one; after inventing "faceprinting," a new means of suspect identification via a mud-cast of their face. The Spider (after "faceprinting" Mr. M. during his nap) has some genuine insight into who left a very dirty towel in the Moppett bathroom.

This Spider feast gave way to famine with no appearance until #78 (Dec 1954), although #76 has a time bomb and Tub disguised as a sack of potatoes. But to be a "Spider" story the Spider must get mentioned; there are many stories with Tub as a detective. Anyway, #78's "The Spider and the Million Cats" was worth waiting for. When Tub re-enacts the crime (by putting on Mr. Moppett's new squeaky shoes) to establish motive, a feline frenzy erupts, and though the case is solved, our young

After August 1940 **Popular** had DeSoto switch back the cover paintings to the "tamer" dark-masked Spider rather than the bizarre one inside whose mask was a monstrosity and who padded his shoulders into a hunchback (Feb 1941).


ONE MOMENT WHILE I ASSUME THE CHARACTER OF... THE SPIDER!
WE'LL... NEED HELP, TUB!
THE SPIDER IS A LONE WOLF!
WHAT GOOD IS A WATER PISTOL?

Tub goes "ballistic," taking on the Spider role with a vengeance! Writer John Stanley really drew on his pulp roots for this one. Good thing Tub was packing his water pistol—so the Spider could use it! ("The Spider and the Secret Six" **Little Lulu** #61).

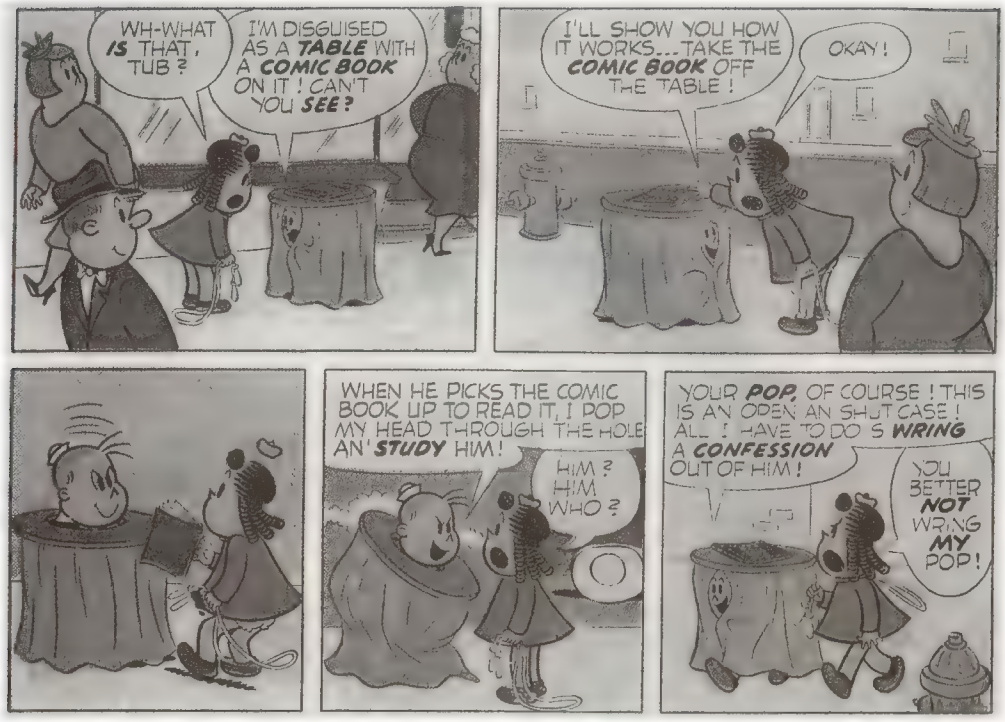
A typical and classic illo from the pulp mag of the Spider—with grim face and big guns—shown behind his secret identity, backgrounded by the ubiquitous webbing! Richard Wentworth was a rich criminologist who was secretly the Spider.

detective runs screaming from Lulu's house—with a whole lot of cats in hot pursuit.

Little Lulu #81 (Mar 1955) featured a second entry in the series titled "The 'Spider' Spins Again" (there are quote marks around the word "Spider" in the second version), and it's a virtuoso Stanley performance as the Spider solves the mystery of why Mr. Moppet shaved off his mustache. Stanley's great achievement here is the distillation of the series into a mere five pages that fully exploit a goodly number of the mantras: the absurd "crime," the bizarre disguise, Tub's pulpy "in your face" confrontations with the suspect, and the killer climax showing the divide between the child and adult points of view. This is the story reprinted in that monumental

DON'T DO ANYTHING TILL I GET BACK... THIS CASE IS RIGHT UP THE 'SPIDER'S' ALLEY!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TUB CAN DO—
I CALL MYSELF THE 'SPIDER' CAUSE—
I KNOW! I KNOW!
TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
OKAY, LULU... I'M READY TO GO TO WORK!
WHAT IN THE WORLD-?
I'M DISGUISED AS A BABY ELEPHANT!
GOSH, WAIT'LL YOUR FATHER SEES WHAT YOU DID TO HIS GARDEN HOSE!

Little kids and big crimes mix it up again in "The Case of the Sorry Snooper" from **Little Lulu** #68 (Feb 1954). After Lulu's dad disappears, she solicits Tub's help but is justifiably taken aback when the Spider shows up "disguised" as a baby elephant.


WH-WHAT IS THAT, TUB?
I'M DISGUISED AS A TABLE WITH A COMIC BOOK ON IT! CAN'T YOU SEE?
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW IT WORKS...TAKE THE COMIC BOOK OFF THE TABLE!
OKAY!
WHEN HE PICKS THE COMIC BOOK UP TO READ IT, I POP MY HEAD THROUGH THE HOLE AN' STUDY HIM!
HIM? HIM WHO?
YOUR POP, OF COURSE! THIS IS AN OPEN AN SHUT CASE! ALL I HAVE TO DO S WRING A CONFESSION OUT OF HIM!
YOU BETTER NOT WRING MY POP!

"The Case of the Taken Tonic," from **Little Lulu** #96 (Jun 1956) boasts one of Tub's most outrageous disguises. When Mr. M. lays his pipe on the table (not knowing Tub's nose is right behind it) our hero is overcome by the funniest case of secondhand smoke ever!

volume *The Smithsonian Book of Comic Book Comics* back in 1981 that made many super-hero fans aware that lovers of incisive storytelling would have to seek out John Stanley's work on *Little Lulu*.

Issue 85 (Jul 1955) presents "The Spider and the Broken Window," another compact (5-page) entry with the Spider yet again coaxing a confession from Mr. M. Tub's mastery of the guilty mind harks back to how the pulp Spider gained such knowledge after posing as a crook many times. The tale in #86 may represent the last mini-rally (two-in-a-row) of the series. But "The Case of the Mysterious Noise" is a minor effort, despite its being the lead story in the issue.

After laying low, the Spider popped up with a solid entry in #96 (Jun 1956), "The Case of the Taken Tonic." Tub disguises himself as a table with a comic book on top of it, planning to study his suspect while they peruse the comic. This leads to disastrous and deliriously funny results.

In the last two tales above Stanley added a new element that truly mirrored the eponymous pulp hero. In both, Tubby is dealt a setback so severe that he doubts he'll solve the case and the Spider will fail for the first time. This reminds one of when *Popular*'s protagonist despaired so after a major reversal that he attempted suicide! (In "Overlord of the Damned" Oct 1935.) Of course both Spiders bounce back, but those low moments pack that "emotional urgency" that *Popular* editor Roger Terrill rightly made a hallmark of the series, aided by an assortment of writers, chiefly Norvell Page, who seemed to have a good grasp of various depths of feeling.

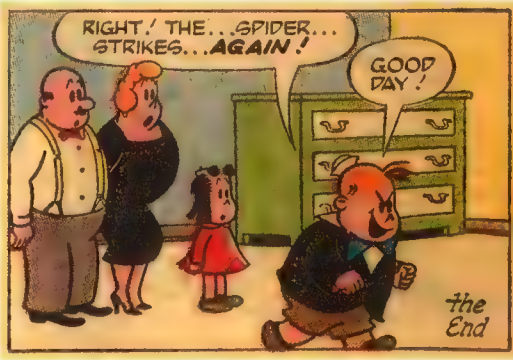
There may be other entries in the series—one hopes so—but the thirteen presented here make a good "case" for the Spider series to be considered as an important subset of Stanley's *Lulu* opus. And they come charmingly packaged with Stanley's fond memories of a certain pulp hero from *Popular Publications*.

Another handsome version of the Spider—if not the crazed crook-killer of the pulps—can be seen in the movie serials. This image hails from Columbia's 1941 **The Spider Returns**, showing the hero with his partner, Nita Van Sloan, and his assistant, Jackson.

THIS IS VERY BAFFLIN', BUT I THINK I'LL TAKE THE CASE!
GOSH, TUB, THANKS!
"THE SPIDER" ALWAYS GETS HIS MAN!
THE SPIDER?
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I CALL MYSELF! A SPIDER SPINS A WEB TO CATCH HIS PREY!
AH, HERE IT IS!
GOSH, WHAT IS THAT, TUB?
THIS IS MY DISGUISE!
YOUR POP IS USED TO SEEIN' ME WITH TWO EYES! HE WON'T RECOGNIZE ME WITH THREE EYES!
GOSH!
BUT THE EYES ARE PAINTED ON THE GLASSES! HOW CAN YOU SEE THROUGH 'EM?
I CAN'T! YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAD ME OVER TO YOUR HOUSE!

Lulu learns of Tub's alter ego in these choice origin panels. The seemingly simple art conveys a wide range of emotion. Most of Stanley's pencils during this era were inked by Irving Tripp (**Little Lulu** #55).

The Spider seldom appeared "properly" on the covers of his own mag. Instead of the fanged-false-face he usually sported a small dark mask. Only in early- to mid-1940 did the real Spider get his portrait painted by Rafael DeSoto; this image is from his June cover.

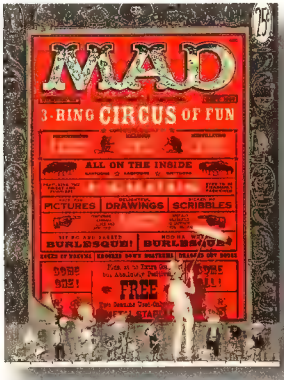


The hero stalks off at story's end leaving his audience to marvel at his dazzling deductions. "The Spider Strikes" was the title of the novel in the first issue of the **Popular** pulp magazine back in October 1933 (**Little Lulu** #55).

KURTZMAN THE AUTEUR

Harvey Kurtzman is justly famous as the creator of *Mad* magazine and "Little Annie Fanny" for *Playboy*, but the totality of Kurtzman's artistic achievements affected American popular culture in subtle and far-reaching ways that even now are still being discovered. For instance, stylistically he has always been one of our very best cartoonists, not in terms of the draftsmanship of his art (which he would have readily admitted) but because of its originality, energy and expressiveness. Kurtzman ultimately went beyond aping influences like Caniff and Eisner to create a unique idiom in American humor. Although he did much of his work (including some of his very best work) in collaboration with others, if Harvey Kurtzman can be considered the author of every project he worked on, his entire oeuvre had more of an effect on late 20th-Century American humor than almost any other single person. Harvey was drawing comics and making people laugh for almost 50 years, and through the magic of reprint books and articles like this one, I sincerely hope he'll be making people laugh for another 500 years. I knew Harvey slightly and wish like hell was still among us, still making people laugh, but at least his best work has been preserved and a lot of it is in print thanks to the efforts of Denis Kitchen, Dark Horse, and Gemstone, of course.

Frank Frazetta's *Little Annie Fanny* tryout painting for Kurtzman and *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner.



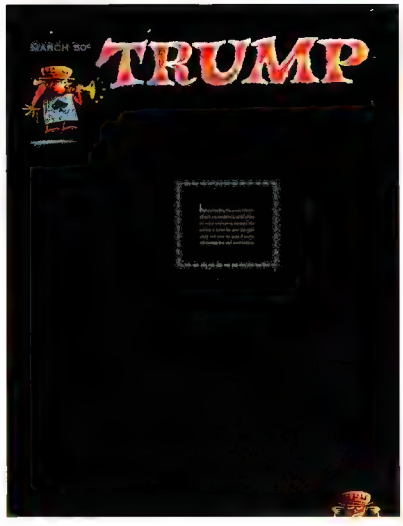
Kurtzman's final issue as *Mad*'s editor. *Mad* #29 (EC, 1956).

Personally, I think it's fascinating to look at the work that Kurtzman did right after leaving *Mad*. The last issue containing work that he did, #29, was finished by Al Feldstein, Jerry DeFuccio and Nick Meglin, who had to scramble to get enough material to fill it since when Kurtzman had left EC to do *Trump* for Hugh Hefner, he took Will Elder and Jack Davis with him, with Wally Wood agreeing to work for Kurtzman but insisting on continuing to work for *Mad*. In retrospect, it was a smart move on Wood's part. Even a casual perusal of the first few Feldstein-edited issues of *Mad* shows a heavy reliance on the brilliant and prolific Wood, with Wood contributing seven pages and the cover to issue #29, eight pages to issue #30, 12 pages to #31, 14 pages and the back cover to #32 and seven pages to #33. At virtually the same time Wood also contributed seven superb pages to the first issue of *Trump*.

After EC Comics went down the tubes in 1956 because of distributor boycotts, low sales, Congressional investigations, comics-burnings and a host of other problems, Bill Gaines was left with only one successful property that he could still publish, *Mad*, the zany and highly original humor magazine helmed by Harvey Kurtzman. Kurtzman had turned *Mad* from a 10¢ color comic book into a black and white magazine printed on the same kind of cheap paper Bill

Continued on page 49

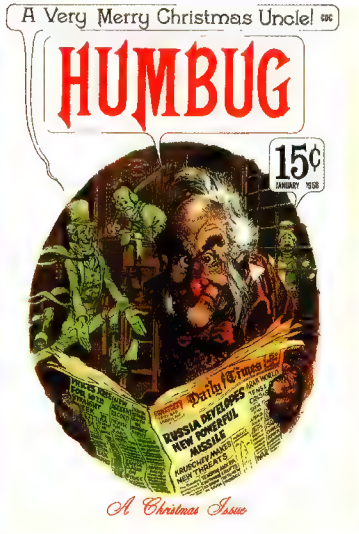
HELP!



IN THE POST-MAD ERA

(1956-1968)

by Steve Ringgenberg



AUTEUR

individual kinds of organisms — **aut·eco-**
au·teur theory \ō-'tər-\ *n* [part trans. of F *politique des auteurs*, fr. *auteur* author; fr. the view that directors are the true authors of a film] : a theory in motion-picture criticism that views the director as the primary creative force in a motion picture

The term auteur is most closely associated with movie directors. The primary examples of cinema's auteurs are Orson Welles, Fredrico Fellini, and Ingmar Bergman. In 1941, wunderkind Orson Welles, fresh from his rousing success in radio and theater, headed off to Hollywood to make Citizen Kane *and become America's first cinema auteur. While Welles was in pre-production with* Kane, *another auteur was making his mark. Will Eisner became comic book's first auteur when he created* The Spirit *as a special syndicated comic book section in newspapers. At first glance,* The Spirit *appears to be another superhero adventure strip, but Eisner used it to tell personal stories of his choice. In the infancy*

***The Spirit* #3 (Warren, Aug 1974), Eisner's art with spectacular coloring by comic book great Richard Corben.**

***The Spirit* #6 (Warren, Feb 1975), Eisner's beautiful cover is enhanced by Famous Monsters, Creepy and Eerie cover painter Ken Kelly's colors.**

THEORY

CBM INTERVIEW: WILL EISNER

by Michael Kronenberg

of the comic book industry, Eisner had the foresight to secure all legal rights and creative control of The Spirit. *While their association with comics embarrassed many other creators at that time, Eisner extolled the art forms' virtues and possibilities.*

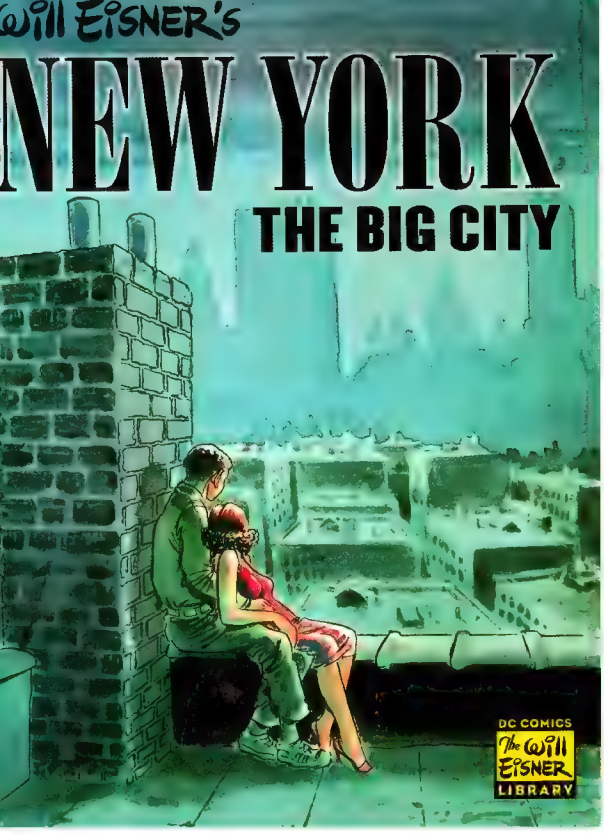
In the 1970's as the film industry began to move away from the studio system, young filmmakers such as Martin Scorcese, Steven Spielberg, and Francis Coppola became the new cinema auteurs, they all looked upon Orson Welles as their patron saint of cinema art. Similarly, in the comic book industry as creators like Frank Miller, Alan Moore, and Art Spiegelman broke away from the cramped style of the large comic book companies to control their own vision of storytelling, they all looked upon Eisner as their role model.

Unlike Orson Welles, Eisner's success and skill only grew with age. He arguably created the first graphic novel A Contract with God. *And to this day at age 87, he continues to tell stories and expand the medium.*

Like many collectors my age, I first discovered Eisner's work through Warren Publishing's reprints of The Spirit *in the mid-seventies. As a fan of* Famous Monsters, Creepy *and* Eerie *I collected most of Warren's output. Of course when I saw* The Spirit *on the stands with its beautifully drawn covers with rich vibrant colors, I had to pick it up. What I discovered inside amazed me. These stories were far more complex and interesting than many of the comics being released at the time. And one of the most memorable things about Warren's* Spirit *reprints was the full-color section each issue contained. Several of those sections and covers were colored by comic book great Richard Corben. Currently, DC Comics is meticulously reprinting (in chronological order) all of Eisner's* Spirit *output as a part of their Archive book series. DC has also made available all of Eisner's graphic novels as a part of the Will Eisner Library.*

Comic Book Marketplace: For many years you've had complete autonomy over your projects—how does it feel to have carte blanche to explore and push the limits of the medium?

Will Eisner: Great!! It feels good, I'm enjoying it. The



In his graphic novel, *New York, The Big City* (DC, 2000), Eisner examines life in the Big Apple through a series of vignettes.

reason I struggled to retain my property in the first place way back was I felt it was the only way to maintain control of the content, the intellectual control. That was the reason I did that in the first place. I was really more interested in that than the potential of money because in those days comics didn't have as great a future as they have today.

CBM: Do you miss the collaborative effort of comic books?

Eisner: Well, there was a collaborative effort when I was doing *Spirit*, but it was less collaborative than it was supportive. I had a staff of people who were intellectually competent and I was able to produce the material with their support. I don't miss what you call the collaborative effort because I'm working alone today very deliberately. I feel I have total control over what I am doing.

CBM: When you had your studios early in the '40s, were you also in control of the projects that you were doing?

Eisner: Oh, yeah. In the Eisner and Iger Studio what I did was design the individual characters at the beginning and then turn them over to people on the staff who would continue them. You know the function of these things is really production support. What I do today has no need for a timed production. It takes me about a year, year and a half, to do a graphic novel and I work at my own pace, create my own deadlines. I'm not servicing a publisher. I guess that's the best way to put it.

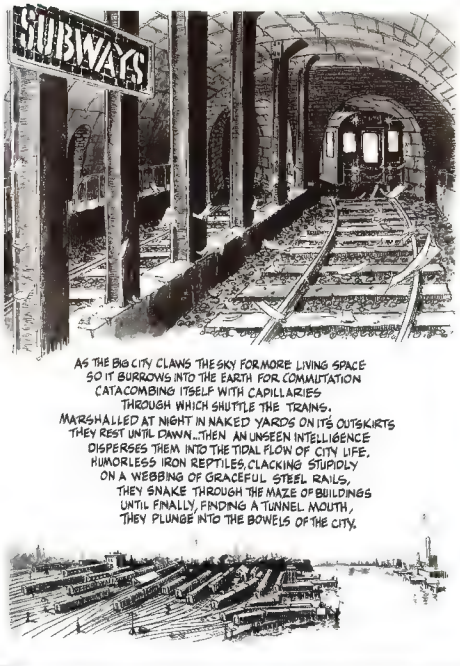
CBM: You do have an agreement with DC, right?

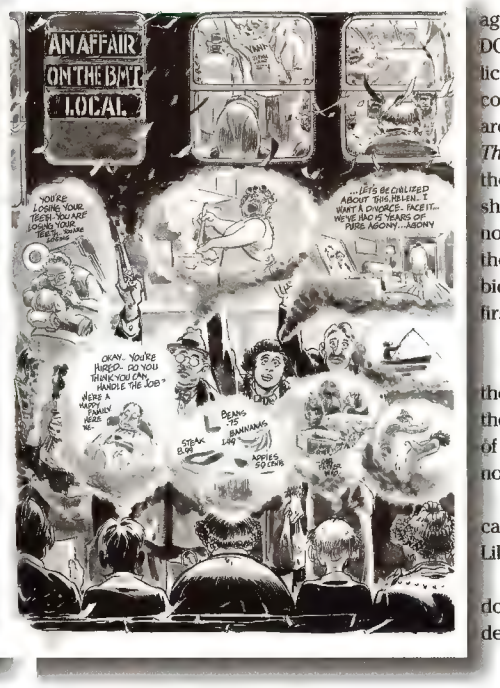
Eisner: The only agreement I have with DC is that I've licensed them to continue producing archival editions of *The Spirit.* And with the Vertigo division I show them my new novels and give them the opportunity to bid on it. They have first look, actually.

CBM: I noticed on the DC website that they are selling some of your back graphic novels.

Eisner: That is called the Will Eisner Library.

CBM: In this vein, do you have any desire to work with

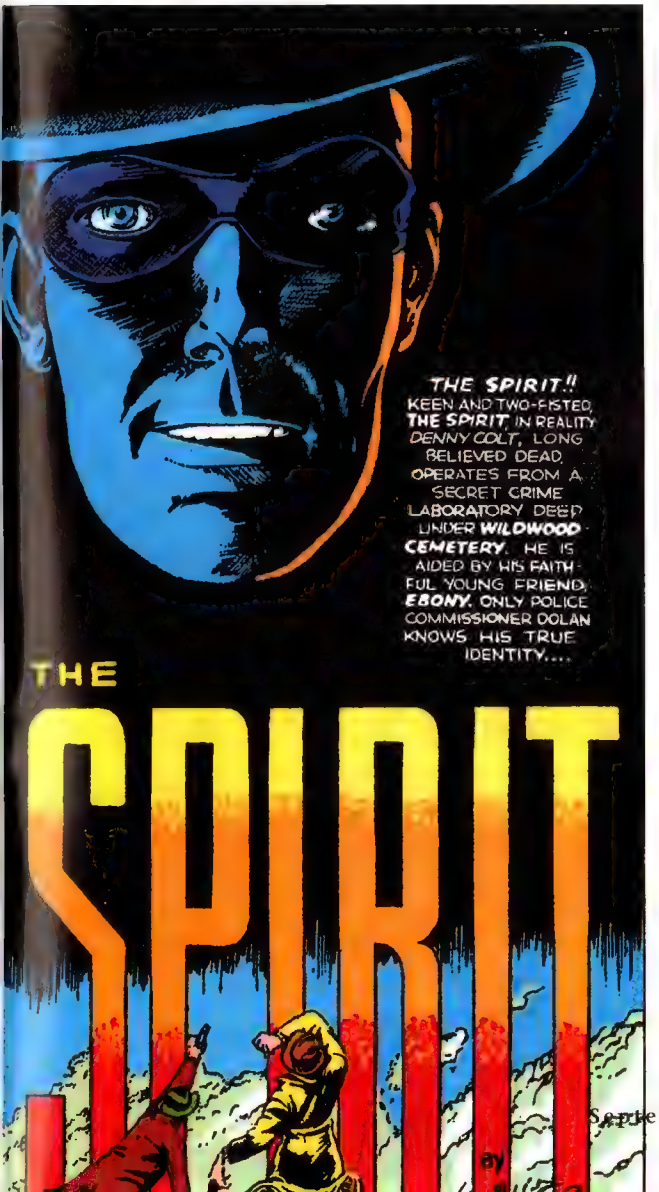

SUBWAYS
AS THE BIG CITY CLAWS THE SKY FOR MORE LIVING SPACE SO IT BURROWS INTO THE EARTH FOR COMMUTATION CATACOMBING ITSELF WITH CAPILLARIES THROUGH WHICH SHUTTLE THE TRAINS. MARSHALLED AT NIGHT IN NAKED YARDS ON ITS OUTSKIRTS THEY REST UNTIL DAWN...THEN AN UNSEEN INTELLIGENCE DISPERSES THEM INTO THE TIDAL FLOW OF CITY LIFE. HUMORLESS IRON REPTILES, CLACKING STUPIDLY ON A WEBBING OF GRACEFUL STEEL RAILS, THEY SNAKE THROUGH THE MAZE OF BUILDINGS UNTIL FINALLY, FINDING A TUNNEL MOUTH, THEY PLUNGE INTO THE BOWELS OF THE CITY.


AN AFFAIR ON THE BMT LOCAL
...LET'S BE CIVILIZED ABOUT THIS, HELEN... I WANT A DIVORCE... FACE IT... WE'VE HAD 15 YEARS OF PURE AGONY...AGONY
OKAY... YOU'RE HIRED. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THE JOB?
HERE'S A HAPPY FAMILY HERE.
BEANS .75
BANANAS .10¢
STEAK B.RIB
APPLES .50 DOZEN

any of today's writers or artists?

Eisner: No, not really. I think there are a lot of good ones around, but they are independent, working on their own. I don't have any desire to work on a story with any of them. I'll work together on something like a discussion on comics. I just did a book with Frank Miller. A one-on-one book where we sat and talked for three days, and someone recorded what we talked about, and they are putting it into a book. Dark Horse is publishing it.

CBM: As many of your contemporaries struggled to hold on to their properties, much less stay employed in the industry, how did you survive and prosper?


THE SPIRIT!!
KEEN AND TWO-FISTED, THE SPIRIT, IN REALITY DENNY COLT, LONG BELIEVED DEAD, OPERATES FROM A SECRET CRIME LABORATORY DEEP UNDER WILDWOOD CEMETERY. HE IS AIDED BY HIS FAITHFUL YOUNG FRIEND, EBONY. ONLY POLICE COMMISSIONER DOLAN KNOWS HIS TRUE IDENTITY....
THE
SPIRIT

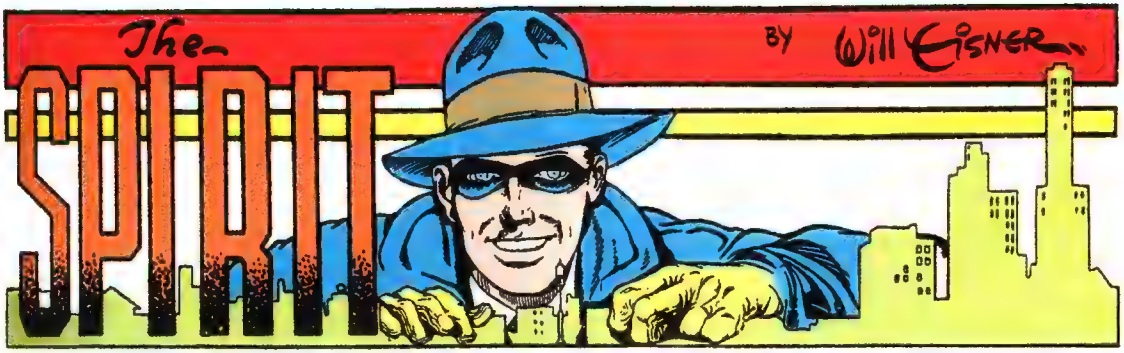
WEEKLY COMIC BOOK
THE ORIGIN OF THE SPIRIT
3 COMPLETE STORIES
June 2, 1940
The SPIRIT
by Will Eisner
GOOD EVENING, COMMISSIONER DOLAN... MAY I COME IN?
DENNY COLT! HAVEN'T I ENOUGH TROUBLE?
BET A NICKEL I KNOW WHO YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT!
YOU'RE RIGHT! HERE'S YOUR NICKEL... IT'S DR. COBRA!
THANK YOU... SO DR. COBRA HAS ESCAPED AGAIN... WHY DON'T YOU BUILD STRONGER JAILS?
OH, WELL, I SUPPOSE I, DENNY COLT, CRIMINOLOGIST AND PRIVATE DETECTIVE, WILL HAVE TO AID YOU AGAIN! I KNOW WHERE DR. COBRA IS!!
THEN WHAT'RE YOU STANDING HERE FOR? C'MON!
WAIT A MINUTE, HOLD ON!
I WANT THAT REWARD, DOLAN/SO IF YOU'LL GIVE ME AN HOUR AHEAD START, I'LL GET HIM FOR YOU!
FINE, KID! O.K. HMPF... TAKE IT EASY... HE'S A CUNNING OLD BIRD!

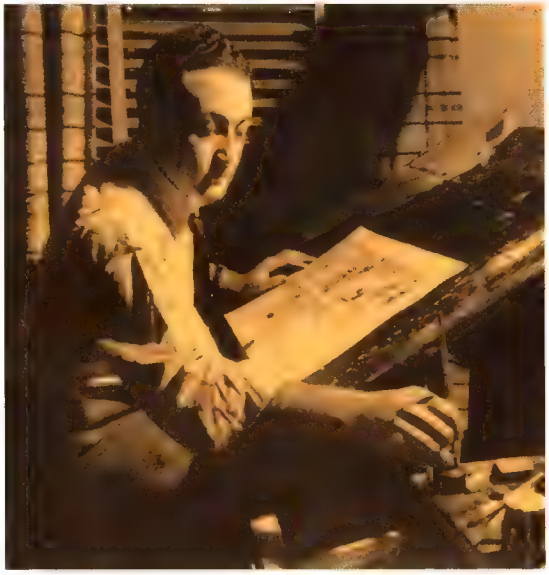
Eisner's first page, of *The Spirit* (June 2, 1940) featuring Denny Colt's origin. LEFT: Moody splash page from November 24, 1940 containing a nice summary of The Spirit's origin.

Eisner: Why, hard work, and luck.

CBM: You know, you read about how Siegel and Shuster sold their rights to Superman; I guess maybe Bob Kane would be one of the exceptions, but even Carmine Infantino right now is suing over his property.

Eisner: Actually Bob didn't get equity back into it until much later. Before he first sold his property, they owned it. It was a trade practice in those days. Nobody really questioned it. When you say they fought or struggled to get their properties or to hold onto their properties, that's not true. Nobody really made even an attempt. I'm the only one that even made an attempt. And I just gave you the reason for that—I wanted control over the editorial contents. Besides *The Spirit* was designed for newspapers, not a comic *book*. The standard trade practice in the comic book industry was that you sold an idea, like Bob brought Batman to DC, they owned it. Siegel and Shuster brought Superman to DC—they owned it. And there was no question about it. Like Siegel and Shuster signed the check that they got and on the back of the check was stamped





Will Eisner at his drawing table inking *The Spirit*, 1941.

the words "For all rights and title." When Bob Kane signed his contract, I was at his house (we were high school buddies), and it very clearly said that they, DC, owned Batman. It wasn't until years later that he was able to get them to agree to put his name on the property. They give him a royalty, but they own the property. They never gave the property back to him. Bob never really struggled to get the rights.

CBM: I find it amazing that you really were the only person who seemed to think about this at the infancy of the industry. Did you see the potential for the medium back then? Look what it's become with the graphic novels, the ability for self expression, there's movies and television shows—did you see this?

Eisner: Yes, I always saw it. As a matter of fact as early as 1940 I had an interview with the newspaper *The Baltimore Sun*, and I said that this was an art form that was a really valid art form. I always believed that this medium had literary potential or was a literary form. I believed it from the very beginning. One of the reasons I went into *The Spirit* was because I wanted to get out of what I felt was the "comics ghetto" and the newspaper syndication gave me the opportunity to write to adults. It was always what I really wanted to do. But I always believed this medium had a tremendous cultural future.

But that is not the reason why I struggled in that negotiation to retain the ownership. The reason at the time I wanted to retain the ownership is that I wanted to maintain the integrity of the content. The only way to do that is to own the copyright. The business of copyright ownership is questionable. To simply own a copyright doesn't mean you're going to make a lot of money. It depends on how much exploitation you're able to do with it. So it's a totally different kind of thinking.

CBM: Have you been influenced by movies, and was *Citizen Kane*'s release in 1941 an important influence?

Eisner: Wow! I was always influenced by the literature

COMIC BOOK SECTION
THE LAST TROLLEY
March 24 1946
ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE
MOSTLY THEY'RE GONE NOW, THE OLD TROLLEYS...JUST A FEW STILL RUN ...LIKE THE OLD RAVEN'S POINT LINE, FOR EXAMPLE !!..
All day long, like drunken bugs, the creaky jalopies waddle their way through the noisy city, loading up with morning crowds which come back the same way at night....
THE
Will Eisner
The LAST TROLLEY

The trolley-run from the heart of Central City to Raven's Point is only thirty twisted miles and can hardly be called A Great Adventure....
CLACKITY CLACK...CLACKITY CLACK...CLACKITY CLACK...CLACKITY CLACK...CLACKITY CLACK...
CLACKITY CLACK CLACKITY CLACK CLACKITY CLACK
Until 3 a.m.... the trolleys come and go, getting emptier and emptier as the night grows deeper.... then, the last trolley - "The 29 Car" - clatters through the sleeping metropolis, rattles noisily across Central River Bridge, and with its cargo of human flotsam clickety-clacks for the Raven's Point barns.... From here until the end of the line there are no stops — it is the dullest part of the trip!
THE SPIRIT MURDERED!

The opening two pages to Eisner's *Spirit* story "The Trolley" (March 24, 1946). Eisner's beautiful and imaginative splash page sets the tone for the story and his brilliant use of sound effects of the trolley gives this story a cinematic feel.

around me. I was influenced by classic literature; I was very influenced by the short stories of the '30s. The '30s were the big short story era. I was tremendously influenced by early pulps—they taught me how to write short stories. Everything around me has always influenced me. I think that's true of every writer, every artist, everybody that works in the field. But I never sat down and copied, if you will, or imitated, or emulated any of those things. I simply drew from everything I saw around me those things that were necessary for what I was doing. For example, *The Spirit* had a cinematic quality, largely because I reasoned at the time that during the early '40s the readership was all influenced by the movies. Consequently I had to write in a "moving" language. I see pictures, sequential art as I call it, as a language.

CBM: Looking over *The Spirit Archives* and going back to when I first encountered your art when I was 13 years old and picked up the Warren magazines of *The Spirit*—it's always had that feel of film.

Eisner: I was intrigued by graphic language. But, actually, my interest is live theater. As a matter of fact, all my graphic novels are influenced by live theater. But there's a big difference between theater and film. In film you're simply part of the mechanics—they tell you how to look at things; in live theater you are there and you see real people. You're a witness to a real event.

CBM: Were you in New York when there was the explosion in the theater, and Arthur Miller was writing, and Tennessee Williams? Were you able to see those?

Eisner: Sure. A big influence on me was the WPA theaters during the Depression. They taught me an awful lot about stagecraft. In those days, the WPA theaters…you know what I'm talking about? The Works Progress Administration? I learned a lot about stagecraft from them because they were very poor. They did not have enough money for fancy stage scenery so what they would use was a very minimal stage scenery which involved audience participation and made the audience use their own imagination. For example, in one of the plays, I think it was an O'Neill play, they had a single streetlight

in the center of the stage and the actors would move inside or outside of the streetlight to indicate being inside of the house or being outside of the house. It was very, very fascinating. I learned a lot about that. I learned how to employ the kinds of backgrounds that would involve my readers.

Another influence on me in that whole area was the work of George Herriman and his Krazy Kat. You examine the work he did and you'll find that he had an incredible ability to engage the reader from scene to scene. These are the things that I learned from. I really don't call that influence, I learned from them.

CBM: There were great artists in the WPA also—Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood. It was kind of a renaissance of American art as well.

Eisner: Leyendecker was a strong influence on me. The crosshatching in my shadows I learned from him. He designed and developed what he called transparent shadows. I used that a lot in my line work.

CBM: At what point in your career did you feel that you had gained creative control to tell the stories you wanted? Was it when you secured the rights for *The Spirit*?

Eisner: I've always had creative control in all my work all my life, in everything I've done, except where I've done comics that were used for instructional material. There I had a certain amount of creative control, but the medium was being used to teach. For example, the work I did during the '50s and '60s with the military—when I produced training material.

CBM: Who do you look on in the time that you've been in the industry as people who have been writers and artists, people who have had the control that you enjoy?

Eisner: Well, it's hard to do because there are so many of them. Today there are a tremendous amount of people who are producing their own work. Many of the artists who began self-publishing are an example; if you list all the guys who are self-published, they have total editorial control. It doesn't come cheaply, it's at a price. Self-publishing fellows work very hard at marketing their own books, taking the gamble of producing a book and hoping they may sell enough copies to pay the printer and survive. Editorial control comes at a great price. But when you're working for a publisher, when you're doing *Superman* for example, you have to give up a certain amount of control because it is somebody else's property. You can do innovative things, like Miller did with Batman. But nonetheless the property is not his.

CBM: But you also have to get to a certain point, you have to have a name as you do, or Frank Miller does, to even be able to do what he did. Which is not easy to do as it is.

Eisner: Well, I don't think "name" has anything to do with it. I think what you do has to do with an innate desire to do it.

CBM: I guess what I mean is that a big company that has a property would even let you bring about a change or something a little more unusual to their property—they're so protective of their property.

Eisner: Obviously, and they should be. They entrusted the property to Miller because he had been working with them. He had demonstrated a great deal of ability and had probably convinced them that he could do something with it. I don't know what the conditions were, what was in the mind of DC when they entrusted the property to him. But whatever it was, they made a good choice because what he did with Batman was very unusual.

CBM: So what do you see in comics today that you like?

Eisner: Oh, I like the new stuff that is coming along—the very young people who are developing new, experimental work. I think they are the future of the business. And I'm very happy to see the young graphic novelists producing very serious material. So I am very optimistic about the future of the medium. I think we are in a wonderful time. Plus the fact that in the last two years the public libraries and the schools have recognized and accepted the graphic novel, which is really the thing I've been waiting for for 30 years.

CBM: What do you see that you dislike?

Eisner: What I dislike, that I used to caution my students against, is the slavish imitations. A lot of artists go into the field thinking, "Well, this is a quick way to make money so I'll do a superhero." We have plenty of superheroes. I dislike it when artists and writers that come into the field are not producing material that comes from their own experience. A lot

of the fellows have nothing to say, or at least don't attempt to say anything. That is the only thing I regard as wasteful, really. But the rest of the field is booming and it's alive and it's very productive. New people, young artists are coming in. I think it is a wonderful time for the comics.

CBM: I think creatively in the industry it's a great time. There are people crossing over from other mediums—whether it's film or novels. And they're coming in and either writing or doing art. I think that the crossovers are pretty amazing. I don't think I've ever seen anything quite like it.

Eisner: I agree with you. It's tremendous, very exciting. I'm very enthusiastic about it. And the only thing that makes me sad is I wish I was 25 years younger.

CBM: (Laugh) You *act* like you're 25 years younger.

Eisner: Well, I feel 25 years younger. It is a wonderful time.

CBM: I guess what I want to ask you also is that readership is not what it was—say, I know it is hard to compare to the '40s when *Superman* or *Detective Comics* would sell nearly a million copies a month—but readership is down and comic book shops have been closing although things are getting better lately. Is there anything that you see that could bring readership back up or anything that the medium could do or change in their direction?

WHAT'S THE GAG!! PABLO SAYS THAT A CAPTAIN EL MUERTO WISHES TO SPEAK TO ME OUT HERE.
SI, SEÑOR. SPIRITO! I AM CAPITAN EL MUERTO, GUARDIAN OF MONTABALDO. WHEECH AT THEES MOMENT EES BEING ROBBED OF EETS TREASURE!
I DON'T GET IT WHO IS EL MUERTO? WHERE IS MONTABALDO? ..AND WHY DO YOU PICK ON ME? COME CLOSER, SO I CAN SEE YOU!
YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY BACK TO NORTH AMERICA AFTER AN ONSUCCESSFUL SORCH FOR A CRIMINAL KNOWN AS THE OCTOPUS ..EH?
YES?
YOU SUSPECTED HE LANDED ON AN ISLE, BUT WHEN YOU GOT THERE THE ISLE WAS GONE.
EH?
YES..?
YOU GUESSED CORRECTLY, FOR THE ISLE WAS MONTABALDO, AND EET SONK.. BUT NOT BEFORE EET WAS DISCOVERED THAT EET CONTAINED UNTOLD RICHES!
SO?
SO, SEÑOR CRIMEFIGHTER, THE OCTOPUS EES QUITE ALIVE, AND WEETH THE AID OF MODERN MACHINES EES SALVAGING THE SONKEN TREASURE RIGHT NOW!
WHAT!
WELL, I STILL CAN'T SEE WHY YOU WANT MY AID.
BECAUSE, SEÑOR, I AM QUITE DEAD, AND, AS YOU SEE, CHAINED! THE LEGEND ABOUT ME IS QUITE TRUE. LUCKILY, BECAUSE OF YOUR PLANE ACCIDENT YOU ARE AT HAND TO AID ME.
THIS SOUNDS FISHY TO ME. LOOK, MISTER EL MUERTO, I'M NO TOURIST TO BE TAKEN IN BY...
GLRRR
CRACK
SEE FOR YOURSELF! NOW COME QUEEKLY.. MY GALLEON AWAITS./
JUMPING FOGNOGS! HIT BY LIGHTNING, AND STILL STANDS?! O.K...I'LL GO.

Eisner's stories have always been able to reflect mood and he's always used rain to great effect. This page from *The Spirit* #1 (Warren, April 1974), magnificently colored by Richard Corben.

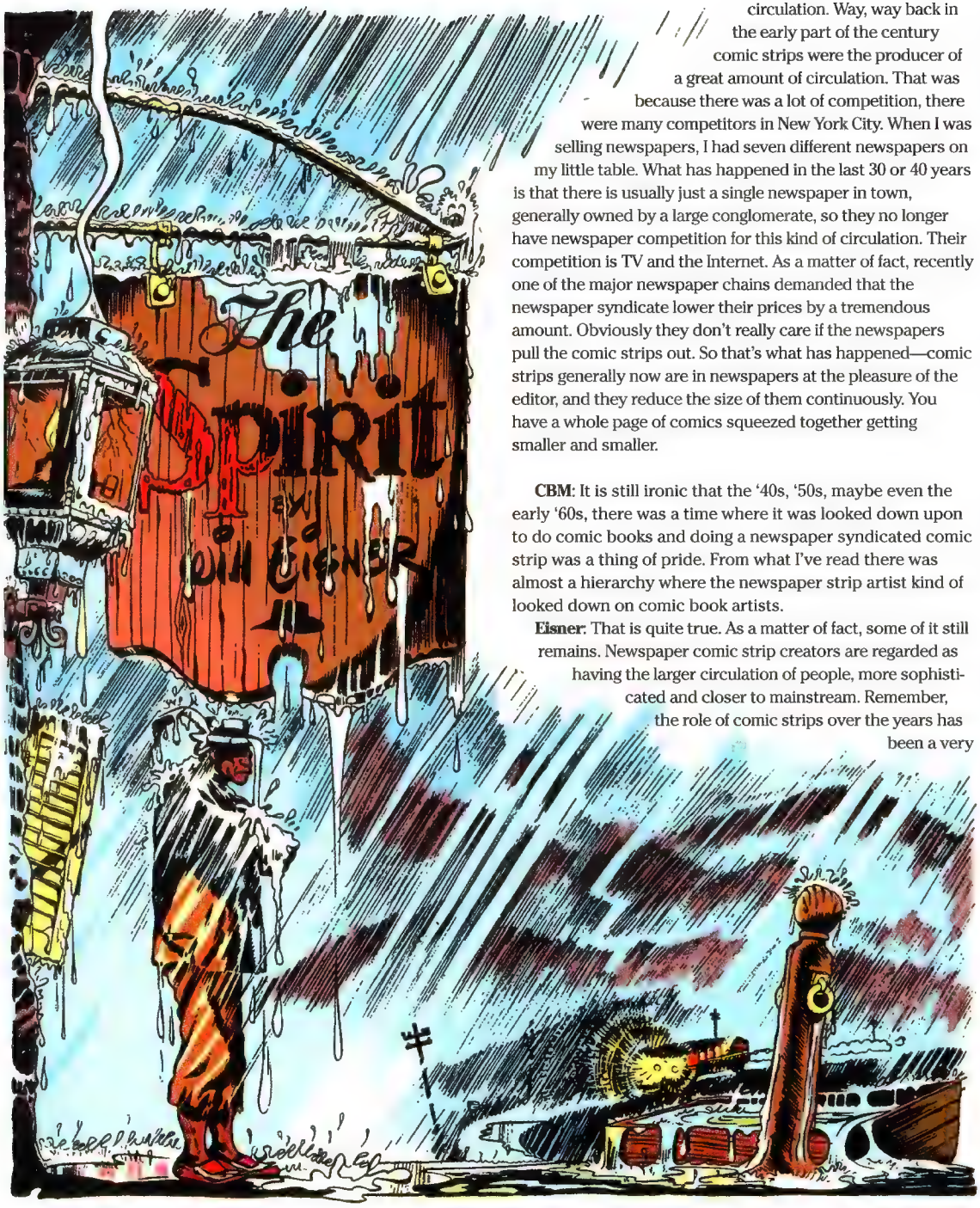
Eisner: Well, let me tell you how I see the field now. I think what has happened to the readership is that it has been fractionated. What you have now is what they call "niche publishing." There are segments so that you have superhero comics, you have story comics, like *Bone*, you have satirical work like the stuff done by Batton Lash, his supercreature lawyers, and the younger fellows like Thompson who did the coming-of-age *Blankets*. Each one has a market of its own, so what you have is total readership that is a lot greater but it is segmented into what I call special interest. The same thing is happening in literature, where you have people who like science-fiction stories, you have people who like romance novels. Each of the fields have a segment of their own. That's what is happening in this field today. There is something else that is happening, of course, is the sudden discovery by the movie picture people—discovering comics as a source of material, source of ideas and story material.

CBM: Hopefully they will stay loyal to what has been done. I read recently that *The Spirit* was picked up. Can you talk anything about that?

Eisner: Well, the contract that I have is that they must adhere to the configuration of the characters. So the business of *The Spirit* flying around between buildings is not likely to happen. That's all I know about it.

CBM: At one time the newspapers were flooded with creative comic strips like *The Spirit*, when Alex Raymond was doing *Flash Gordon* and Foster was doing *Tarzan* and *Prince Valiant*, Caniff was doing *Steve Canyon* and *Terry and the Pirates*—what do you think has happened to them?

Eisner: Well I'll tell you, for a short while I was president of a newspaper syndicate so I have some experience. What happens is the comic strips are no longer the major source of



circulation. Way, way back in the early part of the century comic strips were the producer of a great amount of circulation. That was because there was a lot of competition, there were many competitors in New York City. When I was selling newspapers, I had seven different newspapers on my little table. What has happened in the last 30 or 40 years is that there is usually just a single newspaper in town, generally owned by a large conglomerate, so they no longer have newspaper competition for this kind of circulation. Their competition is TV and the Internet. As a matter of fact, recently one of the major newspaper chains demanded that the newspaper syndicate lower their prices by a tremendous amount. Obviously they don't really care if the newspapers pull the comic strips out. So that's what has happened—comic strips generally now are in newspapers at the pleasure of the editor, and they reduce the size of them continuously. You have a whole page of comics squeezed together getting smaller and smaller.

CBM: It is still ironic that the '40s, '50s, maybe even the early '60s, there was a time where it was looked down upon to do comic books and doing a newspaper syndicated comic strip was a thing of pride. From what I've read there was almost a hierarchy where the newspaper strip artist kind of looked down on comic book artists.

Eisner: That is quite true. As a matter of fact, some of it still remains. Newspaper comic strip creators are regarded as having the larger circulation of people, more sophisticated and closer to mainstream. Remember, the role of comic strips over the years has been a very

Last Day in Vietnam **(Dark Horse, 2000), Eisner uses his experiences in the military working on *P.S.* magazine to cull these stories from the Vietnam and Korean Wars.**

strong cultural role. The early comic strips provided a way for immigrants to be able to read and identify with humor, society and our culture. The role of the comic strip has diminished into a form of pure entertainment now—much of it satire. But there is still a sense of hierarchy that lingers. It is slowly being eaten away; the National Cartoonists Society is now including comic book artists which they didn't do at the beginning. As comic books get a little bit more sophisticated and begin to become more influential, the artists and writers who are working on them become more influential themselves.

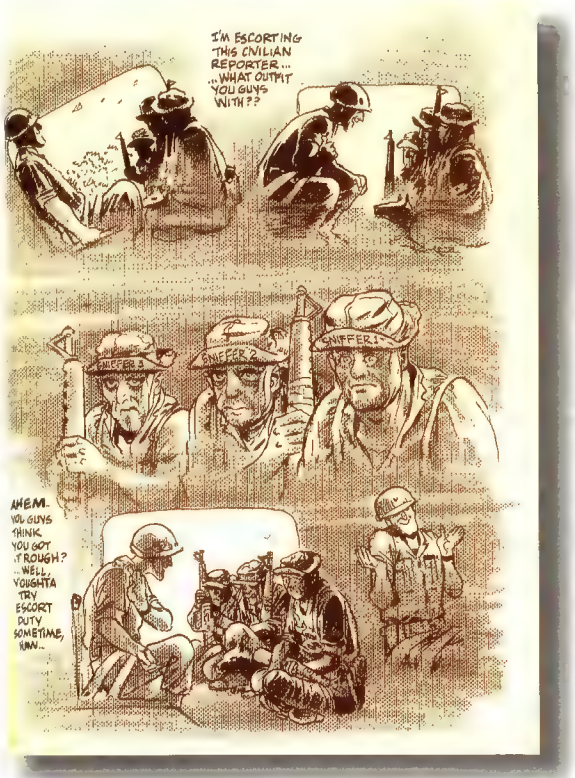
CBM: Can you take us through the creative process of working on one of your graphic novels? Do you write a full script before you start?

Eisner: No, the way I work is I start with the ending; I know what the ending is going to be. Then normally what I do is I write and draw the whole thing out in pencil roughs on a sheet of typewriter paper. I don't use the typewriter to write. I write with a sequence of pictures including balloons for dialogue. I compose scenes with balloons in place first. I know exactly where the story is going because I know what the ending is. So I'm constantly working my way up through a maze of events into the ending. Any innovation I do along the way is a way to bring me to the next level. Sometimes I will plan the whole thing like a laundry list—I'll just list events that I want to go into. I write and draw at the same time—the dialogue and the pictures at the same time. When you compare that with a book of text, the pictures or the images are metaphors and the dialog is a conversation between the people in the thing. I rarely overuse narrative unless it's a special kind of book like *Fagan the Jew* in which I used a lot of connective narrative. I'm using a lot of that now, more than ever. In *The Name of the Game* I also used a connective narrative where I was discussing connective history because this native is incapable actually of dealing with time. The word "meanwhile," which we used for years, is no longer enough.

Will Eisner in the army, 1943.

CBM: I know you were drafted. Did you see combat in World War II?

Eisner: No. I was at the Pentagon during World War II producing training


I'M ESCORTING THIS CIVILIAN REPORTER... ...WHAT OUTFIT YOU GUYS WITH??
SNIFFER 3
SNIFFER 2
SNIFFER 1
AHEM. YOU GUYS THINK YOU GOT IT ROUGH? ...WELL, YOUGHTA TRY ESCORT DUTY SOMETIME, MAN...

In *Last Day in Vietnam*, Eisner experiments with the medium by rendering the entire book on Craftint board to give the art a rough and textured feel. He also incorporates the use of photography (above right) to complement the art.

material. I did see a lot of military action after the War. At the start of the Korean War the Army asked me if I would contract to do a continuation of the magazine (*Army Motors*) that I did during World War II called *P.S. Magazine*, and I agreed to do it. I would travel to the combat area in Korea and Vietnam during those wars. I was in Germany and several other places.

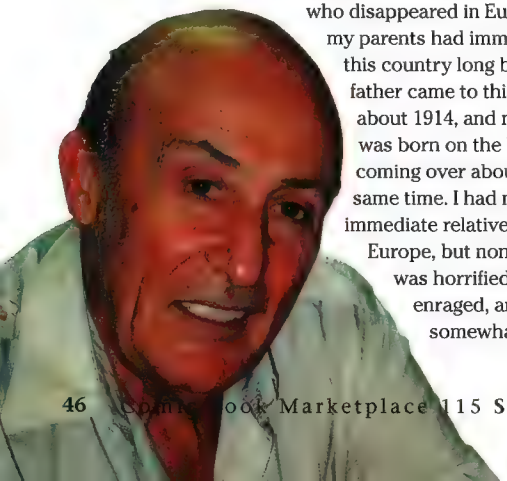
CBM: How did your time in the service affect you, and how did it affect your work?

Eisner: It matured me. The early *Spirit*s were done by a young cartoonist like me who had had no real life experience. I was just out of high school and I was drawing and drawing. I spent my days and nights drawing. During the War and my experience in the military taught me a lot about life, so when I got out in 1945 the stories I began to write were really stories based on life experience.

The thing that people don't really factor in their thinking about comics is that the artists grow up like you do. One of the reasons why I never really wanted to do a daily strip is because in a daily strip you have to be the same all the time.

CBM: During World War II, what did the realization of the Holocaust do to you and how does that affect your work?

Eisner: Like all Jews I was terrified by the Holocaust. As a matter of fact, when I was drafted I tried to get into combat because I wanted to do something. The natural reaction is that you want to do something active against this terrible thing. The military wouldn't let me because apparently what I was doing was something that they felt was more useful to them.



It did affect me. We had relatives who disappeared in Europe, but my parents had immigrated to this country long before. My father came to this country about 1914, and my mother was born on the boat coming over about the same time. I had no immediate relatives in Europe, but nonetheless I was horrified, shocked, enraged, and somewhat terrified because if Hitler had won I might not be here today.

COMIC BOOK SECTION
THE KILLER
December 8 1946
ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE
THE SPIRIT
By Will Eisner
According to statistics, millions of Americans read millions of the most carefully written crime and crime detection stories in the world! Expertly told .... and prepared, after exhaustive research--the best of these are, in effect, lessons in crime and criminal psychology! Yet could you, sitting in the trolley or bus or subway at night, pick out the Killer sitting opposite you?
...TAKE THE MAN SITTING OPPOSITE US NOW! TEST YOURSELF!
KIND? RESPECTABLE? HONEST?
YOU'RE WRONG!
HE'S A MURDERER!!! MURDERER!!!
COME--COME WITH US PAST HIS PLEASANT FACE, DOWN THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDORS OF HIS BRAIN TO THE FARTHEST CORNER OF HIS MIND.....

This page and opposite: One of Eisner's greatest *Spirit* stories "The Killer" (December 8, 1946), Beautifully rendered, Eisner tells the story of a murderer through his eyes — literally.

There are some of us who have very close connections like Spiegelman whose parents were actually in the concentration camp. A lot of Jews in this country had very close connections. My wife is a fourth-generation Jew; her grandparents came over during the Civil War. So she only knew about what was going on in Europe by reading about it. Those who had direct connections felt it much more deeply, of course, but all Jews were terrified. It was a frightening time.

CBM: During the Golden Age of comics when you had your studio, and people like Bob Kane, Simon and Kirby, and Siegel and Shuster were working, did you encounter any anti-Semitism from either publishers or other writers or artists?

Eisner: No, there was none of that, I never encountered it. The reason you remember a lot of Jewish artists was only

FOR EASIER READING AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING, THE READER IS INVITED TO VIEW THE REST OF THE STORY FROM THE INSIDE OF HENRY'S HEAD LOOKING THROUGH HIS EYES!!
WELL IF IT AIN'T ME SOLDIER BOY!! I HEAR Y'QUIT! WELL, IF Y'INTEND T'KEEP ME IN THE STYLE I BEEN USED TO Y'D BETTER BEG JAMES T'GIVE IT BACK!
QUIET, MAY! I GOT A CALL COMIN' THROUGH!
AAH, SHADDAP, SHELOON ... AND HENRY ... Y'NEEDN'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT! IF IT WASN'T FOR US BEIN' IN THE BLACK MARKET...
WHAT? THE SPIRIT? WHERE ... NO, Y'SAP! TIE HIM UP ... I'M COMIN' OVER!
I'M GOIN' OUT T'TRIGG'S HIDE ... MEET ME THERE WIT A FAST CAR, MAY!
O.K. ... HEY, DOPE ... YOU, HENRY! GET THE BIG SEDAN!
I SAID ... ? ! ? HENRY!! PUT THAT GUN DOWN ... EEEEK!
BANG!
AND A FEW MINUTES LATER ...
O.K. ... HIT HIM AGAIN ... HE'S GOTTA TALK!
C'MON, SPIRIT ... WHO SQUEALED ON US ... WHO ...

largely because when comic magazines (in those days they weren't called comic books) started there was new territory. It was easy to get into it, so a lot of the Jewish cartoonists who were on the periphery moved into it. Also, Jews have a long history of storytelling; very much like the Irish, only more Biblical. So this is a natural and very attractive medium for them. We never encountered any anti-Semitism at all. As a matter of fact, none of the Jews I know, including myself, even attempted to introduce Jewish culture, which is something that a lot of people involved in the Jewish community think we did, but it's not true. Mostly the characters we made were Gentile; the Spirit was Gentile. Oh, Jules Feiffer said that everybody knew he was Jewish even though he had a turned-up nose and an Irish name, but that was a joke. All the characters that were created by Jewish cartoonists were WASPs.

CBM: In many ways the same thing occurred in film where a lot of the screenwriters were Jewish and when they were writing about these private detectives or heroes they were all Gentiles.

Eisner: It's only in the last number of years when you've got a Spielberg and people like that who are doing things from the Jewish cultural background.

CBM: And yourself and your graphic novels.

Eisner: What I'm doing now are interesting stories. Actually the last two books I've been doing, *Fagan the Jew* and the one that's going to come out next spring, *The Plot*, are departures for me. They're polemics; they're really not designed as fictional or entertaining storytelling. In *The Name of the Game* I did the history of a wealthy Jewish family just to show the transition and growth—I'm always interested in historic growth as I did in *Dropsie Avenue* when I took on the history of the street in the Bronx. So I'm constantly experimenting, or pushing the envelope if you will. That, for me, is the excitement and adventure of what I'm doing.

CBM: You're also keeping that spirit of New York and that experience of New York and that life at that time alive, which I think was really an important cultural time.

Eisner: You've got to understand that I write only about the things that I know about. The reason I don't do science fiction or space stories is because I don't know anything about aliens from another planet. I write about the things I know. New York City is a marvelous place. It's real theater. It's the center of the Earth. Things are happening there all the time. It's just bubbling with story material so you just really have to dip in there and pull out stories. You can walk down 42nd Street and by the end of the street you can have 15 or 20 stories. I know big cities, I know New York.

CBM: Are you able to get back to the City?

Eisner: Yes, I get back to the City twice a year at least. For about eight years I was commuting there from Florida when I was teaching at the School of Visual Arts, so I stayed in New York almost every week.

CBM: Mr. Eisner, I thank you.

Eisner: You're welcome.

CAPTAIN GRAVITY
And the POWER of the VRIL

PENNY-FARTHING PRESS PAYS HOMAGE TO THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS WITH OUR REPRISAL OF THE POPULAR CAPTAIN GRAVITY SERIES. AVAILABLE IN YOUR FAVORITE COMIC SHOP DECEMBER 2004 IN FULL, NOSTALGIC COLOR!

Created by Stephen Vrattos, written by Joshua Dysart, penciled by Sal Velluto, inked by Bob Almond, colored by Mike Garcia, lettered by Richard Starkings and Comicraft's Albert Deschesne.

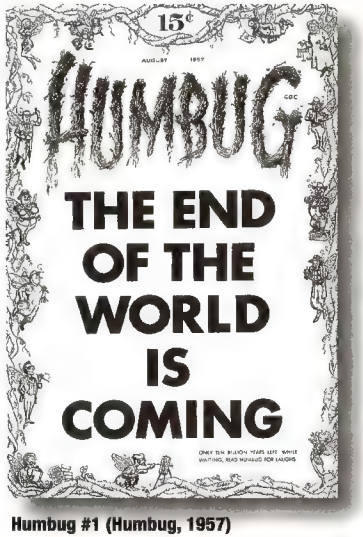
penny farthing press

Beautiful Hair
B E C K
A NAME WIDESPREAD—BECAUSE MAINLY IS TOO MUCH SPACING BETWEEN LETTERS
We are planning to change our brand name to BECKFLUTEN so's we can fill out space up there better. Anyhow—if you want to look like the girl in the Beck ad, make sure you use the right Beck Shampoo on your head, make sure you rinse out thoroughly, and make sure you are a nice lookin', wet-blue eyed blonde, or it's no use. If for any reason you're dissatisfied, just go the store where you made your original purchase, and say—'Hey! I want my money Beck!'
Your local Drug Store carries Three different Beck Shampoos for Three different types of Hair—Dry—Oily—and No
JOHN COMBES BECK INC. · NEW YORK CHICAGO · SAN FRANCISCO BANFF
Everything brightens up with
brisk LIPTONE TEA
IT DOES WONDERFUL THINGS FOR YOU. Mainly it changes the colors in your face and clothes as shown above
YOU START PERKING UP after the first few sips you get brighter and your color gets perkier and your eyes get flashier and your nose gets redder—you rascal you! That's not tea you're drinking!
TREAT YOUR FAMILY OFTEN to this delicious Liptone Iced Tea. Help! We forgot it's winter and were supposed to plug HOT tea!
Lipton TEA
A SWITCH TO LIPTONE MEANS A SWITCH IN HEADTONE!

The hilarious and creative backcover mock ads for Kurtzman's brilliant, but short-lived magazine *Trump* (HMH Publishing, 1957).

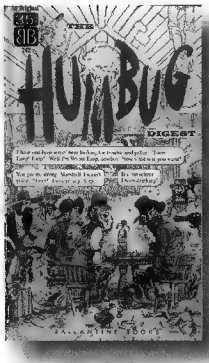
Continued from page 35

Gaines had used to publish his aborted Picto-Fiction series of magazines. It went on to become one of the most successful humor magazines of the 20th Century, transforming Bill Gaines into a multimillionaire in the process. Harvey Kurtzman left *Mad* midway through production on issue #29 to go off and do *Trump* for Hugh Hefner, the brash young publisher of the wildly successful *Playboy*. Hefner offered Kurtzman what he'd always wanted, a chance to do a slick expensively produced humor magazine with the cream of the *Mad* artists, including Jack Davis, Will Elder and Wally Wood, with the additions of Al Jaffee and Arnold Roth. However, despite lavish production values and contributors who were all at the top of their game artistically-speaking, Hefner had overextended himself financially and pulled the plug on *Trump* after the second issue, and Kurtzman and company were left high and dry. Wally Wood was still working for Bill Gaines, so he went back to *Mad* and became one of that magazine's mainstays for 86 issues in a row before he had a falling out with Al Feldstein and quit. Jack Davis eventually went back to work for Gaines, too, but Kurtzman and Elder didn't return to *Mad* until the early '80s, contributing a few strips and covers. However, this was near the end of Kurtzman's career, when he was no longer doing Annie Fanny, and would soon succumb to the cancer that would finally claim his life in 1993.



Humbug #1 (Humbug, 1957)

Humbug #4 (Humbug, 1957)



Material from Humbug's 11 issues was repackaged in paperback format but it failed to even approach the success of Signet's Mad anthologies. Too bad; the material included is all first-rate.

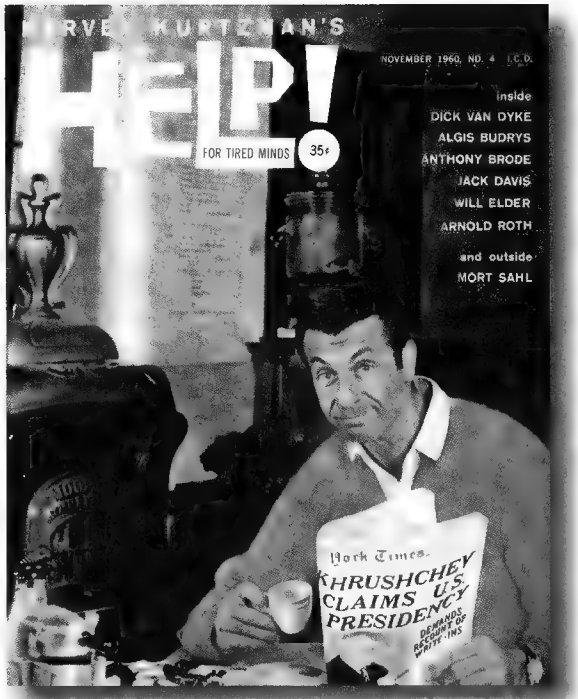
But, I digress. The late '50s, after the twin failures of *Trump* and *Humbug*, Kurtzman's next humor anthology, is an interesting period in Kurtzman's career, though it must have been fairly harrowing for poor Harvey Kurtzman as he scurried around trying to get enough freelance work to keep his small family afloat. It probably seemed like a pretty bleak period for Kurtzman although at the same time he was getting freelance assignments for prestigious markets like *Esquire*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Pageant*, *Playboy*, *TV Guide*, *Madison Avenue Magazine*, even *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

However, even though Kurtzman wasn't pulling down the kind of money Bill Gaines was starting to make with *Mad*, creating *Mad* and working with Hefner, *Esquire* and *Pageant* had made Harvey Kurtzman very hip in the twilight of the plain-gray Eisenhower era. These days it's hard to really understand just how much creative street cred Kurtzman had achieved with comedians, ad men, hipsters, even major TV personalities like Steve Allen and Dave Garroway. As Kurtzman put it in a 1989 interview: "You win your little badges of credibility as you go through life, and I had a collection of badges at that point."

He also got more than his share of tough breaks and just plain bad luck, such as the time Kurtzman was hired by the aforementioned Mr. Garroway, who, on Kurtzman's first day of work, was hauled out of the building on a stretcher after being felled by a heart attack. Needless to say, Kurtzman only lasted about a month at the Today Show. Another opportunity was missed, and again, it wasn't anything Kurtzman did that caused it.

By 1960, it was obvious that Kurtzman was getting stretched pretty thin financially by the fact that he took on the job of editing (uncredited) for the princely sum of $750 an issue, two issues of *Favorite Westerns of Filmland*, a humorous western anthology with funny captions and balloons on photos of popular movie cowboys of the time, like *Have Gun Will Travel*'s Richard Boone, though it featured no strips or artwork by Kurtzman. However, Kurtzman did recruit old pal Jack Davis to paint the cover to the second issue. But it stands to reason that a man of Kurtzman's talent and vision would have taken classier, higher-paying assignments had they been available. Yet, working for Warren on this admittedly low-rent project led to Kurtzman's next big humor magazine, *Help! (for Tired Minds)*. Warren didn't give Kurtzman much of a budget to do the magazine and it relied heavily on reprints of classic comic strips like *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and *The Spirit*, plus short stories by the likes of Ray Bradbury and Ambrose Bierce, fumettis, captioned photos and new work by burgeoning underground cartoonists like Robert Crumb, Jay Lynch and Gilbert Shelton, and, of course, Kurtzman's talented assistant, future Monty Python member and film director Terry Gilliam, alongside work by old stalwarts like Will Elder and Jack Davis, although some of Davis's work for *Help!* consisted of reprints from *Humbug*. "We looked for a format that was basically a cheap format. It was the dollars and sense that determined the format of *Help!*.... We used freebies wherever we could get 'em." Aiding and abetting Kurtzman in his quest to get top-name celebs like Woody Allen, John Cleese, Jerry Lewis, Jonathan Winters and Jackie Gleason to appear on *Help!*'s covers and interior fumettis was future *Ms.* Magazine editor Gloria Steinem. "She didn't know people in (show) business, but she went and...buttonholed people in the business when we had a problem, a celebrity problem.

Kurtzman commissioned Jack Davis to paint this cover for *Wildest Westerns #1*.



Top celebs including Mort Sahl aided Kurtzman by appearing on the cover of *Help!* #4 (General Promotions, 1960).

Little Annie Fanny
MARLEY WAS DEAD!... NOT THAT THAT HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT IT'S A GREAT CHRISTMAS LINE FOR A CHRISTMAS STORY — WHICH OPENS ON AN OFFICE PARTY WHERE OUR ANNIE EXPERIENCES THE WARMTH AND CHEER OF BROTHERHOOD, GOOD FELLOWSHIP AND OVER-INDULGENCE
ISN'T IT FANTASTIC, BABY? —NOTICE—HOW THE IDEA WAS LEFT TO DIE THE BALL AWAY FROM HUCK BUXTON OF "SALES" ON WHICH I'VE HAD A ONE-UP ON BUXTON QUOTE BUXTON! —AND SOME FINE DANCE— BUT SOON BE UNCONFUSED. NO SLEEPING!
BUT BUXTON! YOU DIDN'T TELL ME ANNIE WAS HERE!
ME, BUXTON! I SPEAK OF THE DEVIL!
I DO SLEEP TILL— TILL I AM, PRUNES, I'M NOT GOING TO BE AN OLD MAN AND LOSE MY HAIR!
AND SLEEP TILL I'M GOOD AND READY!
BORN WITH BOTH HAIR AND CLEVERNESS!
CHASE THE GIRLS WHEN THEY'RE YOUNG AND WITH FOUND THEM!
KNEE BUCKS IN BEAUTY LIKE THE MORN, SEE CLOUDLESS, CLEAR AND SMILE AT EARTH'S JOY— (LOST THE RHYME)
AND ALL THAT'S BEST OF DARK AND BRIGHT MEET IN HER ASPECT AND HER EYES— ONE-UPSMANSHIP BUXTON OLD SPORT
I AM, PRUNES! I'M NOT GOING TO BE AN OLD MAN MORE POETRY!
OH, SO ON, BENTON, YOU SILLY THING, YOU! IN A MINUTE, I'LL THINK YOU'RE JEALOUS!
THAT'S ONE-UP ON ME, BUXTON! COME, COME WE HAVE A CLIENT FOR SCARBOROUGH, YOU KNOW, YOU PROMISED TO DINE WITH GREENHOUSE TONIGHT. I'VE INVITED SOME FRIENDS TO DROP IN FOR... UHHH... FOOD, YOU KNOW... INTRODUCTION TO THE SHOWCASE AGAINST PEOPLE
TELL BUXTON TO READ MORE POETRY.
BENTON'S A DECENT SORT, BUT SUCH A BORE. HIS WHOLE LIFE IS APPRAISALS, REPORTS — INVENTORYING! THE CALM AND MEASURED APPRECIATES IS A GOOD PIECE OF AD COPY!
ADVERTISING'S ALL RIGHT, BUT AFTER ALL, THERE'S MORE IMPORTANT THINGS! LIVING! — HAVING FUN! — APPRECIATING THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS!
WHY I DO BELONG TO NICE BUXTON'S "ACCOUNT FILES"!
HE'S SO SILLY TO BE JEALOUS
MY ACCOUNT! FOOL! OOH! GET OFF OF ME, YOU DOPEY THING! CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S MY ACCOUNT SHEET?
AND SOON THE SIDE-EXIT CALMLY, BABY! HA HA! IT'S JUST A SNOWBALL BUNDLE OF OLD SHEETS STUFFED WITH AN EMPTY DELAWARE. THAT'S ONE UP ON HUCK BUXTON.
BUT, MR. BARTHOLOMEW SANDERSON, YOU'RE GOING TO GET TRAMPLED!
IT'S ALL IN THE GAME OF ONE-UPMANSHIP, BABY! COME ON, DARLING, YOU'LL BUZZ IN NICE AND FAST! ISN'T SPEED EXCITING? HOLLOW SIDE RIDES! — MAKES YOU FEEL YOU'RE RIGHT ON THE GROUND!
HOW DO I ME BUT WE ARE ON THE GROUND! THE TIRES ARE FLAT!
Neanderthal Brow large frontal ridge
Hair long Balding
Head Waist forward
Boston travels in Bowler type and hat
Hume Tweed scarf worn outside

Arguably Kurtzman's most famous post-*Mad* creation was *Little Annie Fanny*. Shown above are Kurtzman's original roughs with notes for penciller Russ Heath, whose pencils appear on the right.

Gloria was very quick and effective.... She was an extremely impressive person," Kurtzman recalled in 1989.

However, even though he was producing one of America's best humor magazines, all was not well in the Warren universe. "As we worked, Warren became more and more remote. We just didn't see eye to eye with the format at all.... I don't remember exactly where our differences were, but Warren and I didn't see eye to eye with the format of the magazine." While *Help!* was wildly uneven, Kurtzman's work on the "Goodman Beaver" stories for that publication (continuing a character he'd created for *Jungle Book*) encompassed some of his best and most controversial work anywhere.

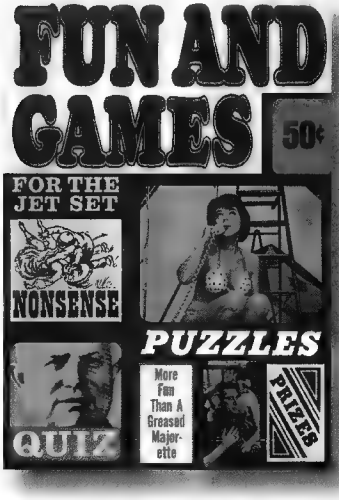
Adding to the other bad luck Kurtzman suffered in the period between 1956-1962, one of these strips, "Goodman Goes Playboy" (*Help!* #13, February 1962) got Kurtzman and Warren sued by Archie publisher John Goldwater, arch-foe of Bill Gaines, Harvey's old boss. Goldwater had always disliked Gaines and EC Comics, and he definitely bore Kurtzman scant love for his earlier parody of Archie in *Mad* #12, so Goldwater sued Kurtzman and Jim Warren for copyright infringement. The upshot of it was that in March 1962, Jim Warren settled with Goldwater for $1000 and published an apology in the next issue. But that wasn't the end of the "Goodman Goes Playboy" saga. Later that same year, Kurtzman and Elder repackaged the Goodman Beaver stories for a MacFadden-Bartell paperback anthology titled *The Executive's Comic Book* (one of the very rarest Kurtzman/Elder collectibles. If you happen on a copy for a reasonable price, grab it!). Elder made a good-faith effort to change the Archie characters' likenesses by changing their hairstyles, hats and other features, even giving 'Roggie' an eye patch, while Kurtzman gave everyone different names. Alas, it was all for naught. In December 1962, Goldwater's lawyer contacted Kurtzman again threatening a lawsuit for copyright infringement. Eventually Kurtzman and Elder paid Goldwater an additional $1000 settlement and turned over the original art and all copyrights to

The first of two photo caption books Kurtzman packaged during the 60s, this one was published in 1962.

the work. Adding insult to injury, the Archie lawsuit caused Kurtzman to lose a book deal with Fawcett.

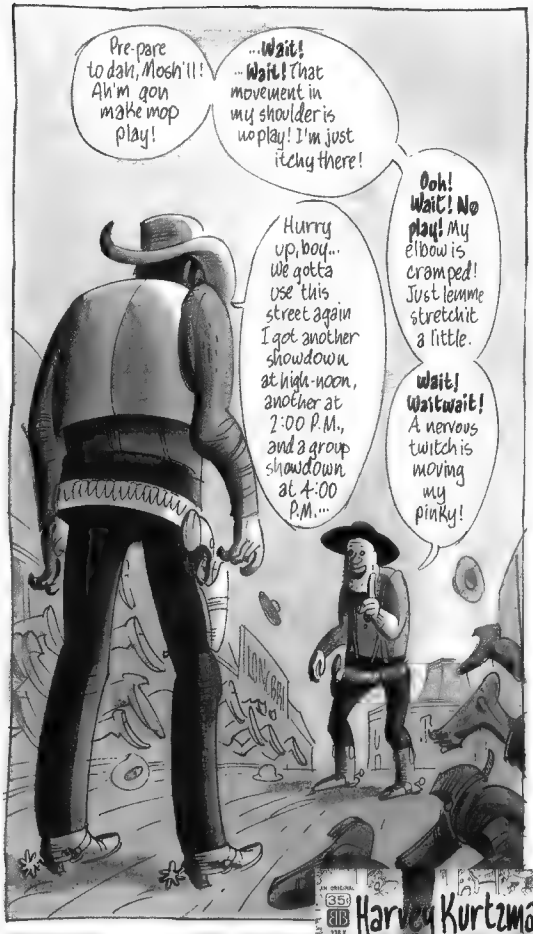
Still, things weren't totally black for Kurtzman. At the same time he was toiling for low wages doing *Help!* for Warren, he was also developing "Little Annie Fanny," for *Playboy*, which, with the assistance of Will Elder, Jack Davis, Arnold Roth, Frank Frazetta, Russ Heath, Larry Siegel and others, would go on to be the most beautiful, lavishly produced comic strip of all time.

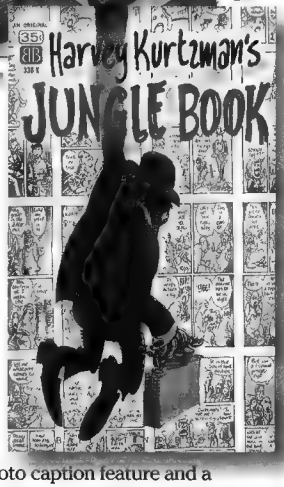
In addition to editing *Help!*, and developing "Annie," who debuted in the October '62 issue of *Playboy*, Kurtzman's early to mid-'60s output included editing several paperback anthologies done in collaboration with Will Elder, Terry Gilliam and others, including two *Help!* collections and two volumes of photos satirizing celebrities and world leaders with funny word balloons written by Kurtzman, Larry Siegel and others. These two anthologies were entitled *Beat It Kid...You Can't Vote* (1967) and *Who Said That? (1962)*. Although the humor in these books is quite dated by now (in fact I defy any reader under the age of 30 to identify most of the world leaders and movie stars featured in either of these books), they are still worth a look for Kurtzman completists and fans of the fumettis that Kurtzman did in *Help!*



The cover to Harvey Kurtzman's Fun & Games, which Kurtzman packaged but did very little writing or art for. One of his oddest projects.

Another rare and unusual paperback Kurtzman edited, with the *Help!* of Terry Gilliam and Chuck Alverson, was *Harvey Kurtzman's Fun and Games* (*For The Jet Set*), a twisted parody of a kid's puzzle book. Although this book contains only one illo by Kurtzman and he didn't even write all of it, it's still of interest to Kurtzman fans because it shows the controversial comics genius editing the work of other talented individuals and includes a funny photo caption feature and a long fumetti story (not written by Kurtzman) just like the ones featured in *Help!* In fact, the last issue of *Help!*, #24 (1965), includes a three-page feature entitled "Harvey Kurtzman's Fun and Games" that may have been the genesis of this paperback; after all, both the book and the final issue of *Help!* came out the same year. By 1965, Kurtzman and Warren abandoned


Pre-pare to dah, Mosh'll! Ah'm gon make mop play!
...Wait! ...Wait! That movement in my shoulder is no play! I'm just itchy there!
Hurry up, boy... we gotta use this street again I got another showdown at high-noon, another at 2:00 P.M., and a group showdown at 4:00 P.M...
Ooh! Wait! No play! My elbow is cramped! Just lemme stretchit a little.
Wait! Waitwait! A nervous twitch is moving my pinky!

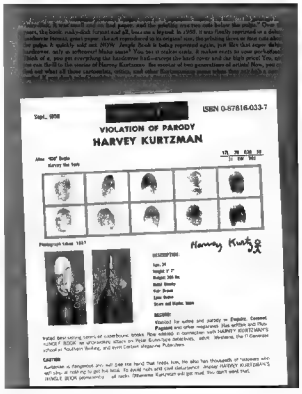


The splash page for "Compulsion on the Range" (above) and the cover to (right) Harvey Kurtzman's *Jungle Book*, an original paperback entirely written, drawn and lettered by Kurtzman. It is a masterpiece of American humor that was unfortunately way ahead of its time, though its reputation has grown in the intervening decades.

GUNK! UNK! UNK!
UNK! UNK!
UNK! UNK! UNK!
Now hold on WINSTON! You did it again! If you want to play that way FRANKLIN-
that's OK by ME...
GUNK UNK UNK-

This page from "Thelonious Violence, Like Private Eye," demonstrates not only Kurtzman's great wit, but also his outstanding storytelling ability.

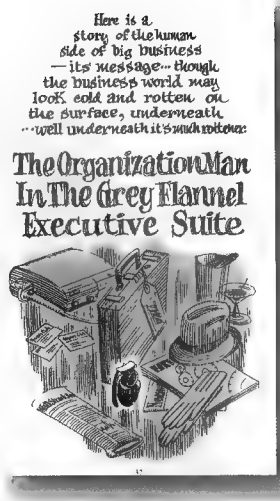
Help!, which had never made money during six years publishing a total of 24 issues. It wound up being a quarterly, though I'm sure that wasn't Kurtzman's original intent. "We were always trying to find a formula that would give us survival," Kurtzman noted ruefully in 1989, adding, "I think the distributors gave us a hard time because there wasn't much money in *Help!* magazine." Interestingly enough, Al Feldstein saw the potential in what Kurtzman was doing and talked Bill Gaines into approaching Harvey to see about doing *Help!* for Gaines as an EC Publications magazine. Kurtzman was still wary of Gaines, so nothing ever came of it. More's the pity, and another opportunity for Kurtzman went down the drain. *Help!* was the last humor magazine that Kurtzman would ever edit.



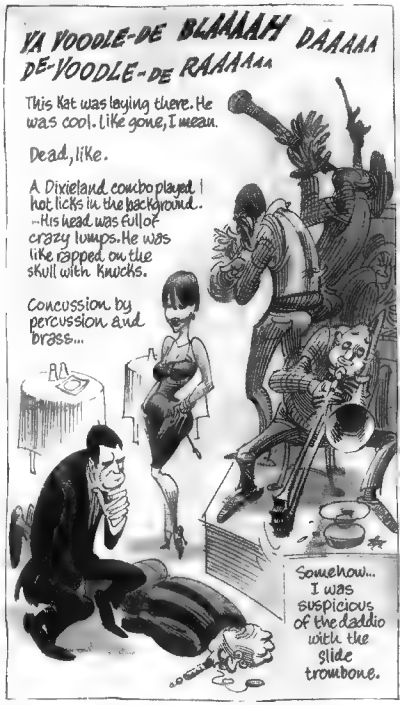
Kurtzman's "biography," reprinted from the back of the reprint edition of Jungle Book from 1988, displays his usual irreverent and puckish wit.

I think it's fair to say that when he was functioning as a writer/editor, Kurtzman used his collaborators as pairs of additional hands in service to his artistic vision. Of course the best of them, splendid draftsmen like Jack Davis, Will Elder and Wally Wood, were also quite capable of adding their own zany sight gags to Kurtzman's funny dialog and captions and carefully designed layouts. It's interesting to compare Kurtzman's writing and editorial work on the paperbacks, articles and magazines he edited working with other artists to his one solo project, *Harvey Kurtzman's Jungle Book*.

Kurtzman's *Jungle Book*, while it has absolutely nothing to do with Kipling, is a really splendid example of Kurtzman working as an auteur. Every plot, every joke, every brushstroke in the book's four stories is pure, unadulterated Kurtzman. As Art Spiegelman noted in his introduction to the Kitchen Sink reprint of *Jungle Book*, "The drawings alone would make this book


Here is a story of the human side of big business — its message... though the business world may look cold and rotten on the surface, underneath... well underneath it's much rottener:
The Organization Man In The Grey Flannel Executive Suite

The title page to "The Organization Man in the Gray Flannel Executive Suite," one of Kurtzman's subtlest and most carefully constructed drawings.


YA YOODLE-DE BLAAAAH DAAAAA DE-YOODLE-DE RAAAAAA
This Kat was laying there. He was cool. Like gone, I mean.
Dead, like.
A Dixieland combo played hot licks in the background. His head was full of crazy lumps. He was like rapped on the skull with knucks.
Concussion by percussion and brass...
Somehow... I was suspicious of the daddio with the slide trombone.

The splash page from "Thelonious Violence, Like Private Eye," Kurtzman's sly parody of hip TV detectives like "Peter Gunn," complete with a jazz soundtrack.

Another example of Kurtzman's Little Annie Fanny roughs and Russ Heath's pencils.

worth reprinting. Nowhere else is there such a large body of Kurtzman's own drawing. All too often his drawings have functioned as guides for his collaborators. Even with the most inspired of these, the lunatic Will Elder, the densely packed eyeball kicks are gotten at the expense of the verve and apparent immediacy of Kurtzman's own drawings." Other than providing Kurtzman with an almost unprecedented forum for his solo work as a satirist, it's a unique project in many ways. For one thing, unlike the majority of Kurtzman's work in the paperback format, it was entirely original, done specifically for Ian Ballantine's Ballantine Books imprint after Ballantine lost the *Mad* reprints to Signet Press. Yet, despite the brilliance of Kurtzman's scripts and his vigorous and expressive tonal artwork, the book was a flop. Perhaps its format was too far ahead of its time for audiences in the late 1950s, even though Kurtzman's parodies of contemporary hip detectives like Peter Gunn, westerns, corporate sagas like *The Man In the Gray Flannel Suit*, and suspense films like *Bad Day at Black Rock* were not that different than his work for *Mad*, *Trump* and *Humbug*. Yet another fascinating aspect of *Jungle Book* is how it reflected Kurtzman's dislike of mechanical lettering. With the exception of the type on the back cover, everything in *Jungle Book* is hand-lettered, including the copyright info on the reverse of the title page. This was Kurtzman's most impressive sustained effort since leaving *Mad*; what a pity it wasn't more financially successful. If it had gone over, it's easy to envision Kurtzman doing a regular series of humor paperbacks and anthologies instead of the handful that he was able to put together here and there. Throughout the '60s and '70s, Kurtzman's work was anthologized and reprinted often, if you count all of his *Mad* work that stayed in print steadily throughout these two decades and beyond, and the two "Annie Fanny" anthologies that were published in 1966 and 1972. By the mid-'60s however, "Annie" was consuming most of Kurtzman's time and almost all of Elder's as they rushed to produce as many as eight strips a year in Elder's painstakingly rendered watercolor technique. This is probably the main reason that Kurtzman did no other paperbacks or magazines during the '60s. In fact, he didn't do another paperback humor anthology until the two volumes of *Nuts* in 1985, very near the end of his tenure on "Little Annie Fanny."

Still, even while Kurtzman stayed busy with "Annie," he always had other irons in the fire. In 1967, he co-wrote *Mad Monster Party*, a stop-motion animated kid's film produced by Rankin-Bass, the same company co-founded by legendary movie title artist Saul Bass that produced innumerable TV specials like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Kurtzman also appeared in a Scripto pen commercial in 1972 that featured him drawing a giant portrait (a Kurtzman-Elder collaboration) of Annie Fanny on the back wall of a prison cell. Stills from this commercial were also used in magazine print ads that appeared the same year. In addition, Kurtzman also wrote, storyboarded and produced two full color fumettis for *Playboy*. In October of 1968, he directed a parody of Antonioni's *Blowout*, and followed it up a year and a half later in the January 1970 issue with "The Good, The Bad and the Garlic," with Tony Randall standing in for Clint Eastwood. As Kurtzman observed in a 1985 interview I conducted for *Heavy Metal*, "I had Tony Randall and a cast of thousands and costumes, a script, a storyboarded script. Up to that point I was doing everything Hitchcock did, and then we would shoot the still pictures." Kurtzman would later go on to storyboard and co-direct three short animated films for *Sesame Street*, but it's a shame the film and TV industries never made better use of Harvey Kurtzman's unique and formidable talents as a humorist. It was yet another opportunity missed by America's best (and perhaps unluckiest) cartoonist.

Don Rosa interview

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is really fascinating. If you get past the junk you learn in school. You have to start off in school with just dates, and places, and names, and you get such an overview that you only get these facts. But when you have time to go to a specific era in history, or event in history, and read the complete details, it's really fascinating. The events of history are so amazing that my adventure stories' plots seem to weave themselves, and I can combine actual facts with other actual facts in such an amazingly logical way that, sometimes, I don't even feel like I should take credit for writing the story. It's like it's always been right there in these history books. You put the two books side by side, you can see this fabulous adventure right there.

I will start writing down ideas for the various jokes, or the action sequences, or the plot twists, jotting them down and slowly start fitting them together like a jigsaw puzzle. Scrapping some of them, finding I have to add more in there.

Then I get some sheets of paper, normal typewriter or computer printer paper that's 81/2 by 11. And I've got these sheets already ruled off into nine comic story pages per sheet, four tiers of panels per page. Usually there are eight panels per comic story page, but I often use up to twelve or fifteen. I will start making notes and.... I can't call them thumbnail sketches, because they're too abstract. It's like shorthand. It's just little scribbles, so that I'll know that this is the character doing something in the panel, and then there are just a couple of words in the panel that will remind me that this is what is being said in the panel. These things are so abstract-looking that, if I look back at them a month later, I wouldn't have the slightest idea of what that is. But I just depend on the fact that I'm going to finish this up in a couple of days and then start writing my script while I still remember what this shorthand means.

One way I found that's the only way to tell a story that is self-contained, and is not like a modern comic book, where I've got to have a beginning, a middle and an end, and it's totally self-contained, the only way to do it is to start with the last panel. If I've got the plot in my head—I know the plot, I know what's going to happen, and above all I know what the ending is going to be, so I know what the last panel is going to be—if I know the last panel, then I know the second-to-last panel. And if I know that, I know the third-to-last panel. And I literally build the story in shorthand scribbles, and I build it backwards from the last panel until I get somewhere around the middle. And then I go to the second most important part of the story, which is the very beginning. It's important in the sense that, for instance, in a treasure hunt—or if it's anything, but let's say a treasure hunt—you can't start in the middle of a treasure hunt.

When you start, the characters have to be totally unaware that they're going to be on this treasure hunt, or that the treasure even exists. You have to learn about it with them, and then you get pulled into the motivations of the characters. You know, this is not something I read in a textbook; it just seems obvious, that that has to be the way it is. And I see that happen in the old Barks adventures. The story never starts with them already on the quest, or whatever. It has to be they're just sitting around the house in Ducksburg, or Scrooge is in his office, doing something real boring.

Anyway, then I'll start building the beginning of the story, panel by panel, again, until I get close to the middle. Now in the middle is the action, the humor, all that stuff. And it's not important whether there are five action scenes, or three action scenes, or thirty-two jokes. You just kind of dovetail the beginning of the story into the ending, and the action is inconsequential. It's sort of the frosting on the cake. It has to be there, but it's not important exactly how it fits in, and how much of it there is.

So then I've got these few pages of these thumbnail sketches. The pages I'm talking about are on 81/2 by 11 paper, but as I said on each page, I've got nine pages laid out. So these are really tiny, little scribbles. In other words I've got nine pages on this one sheet, so each panel is not more than an inch or two square.

So then I'll get out the notebook and start writing the script, using those thumbnail sketches, scribbles, really, as a reference. And hoping that I can remember all the shorthand. [Laughter] And then I write out the whole story panel by panel, page by page, and sometimes I have to go back and scratch out a panel and start over, until I finally finish that process.

And the next part is really the most boring, tedious part of the whole job. The research, that's fascinating. That's fun. That's never tedious, because I'm always finding out so many interesting things while I'm doing research. It would be nice having a job just doing research for somebody, for another writer. That would be a nice job.

But now I come to this tedious job, which is I put all of this down on paper for the editor to see. Now, I would imagine that the proper way to do this when you're writing for an editor is to tell them ahead of time what the story is going to be about, and do a one page synopsis and tell the editor that the characters are going to do this, and go there, and the trick ending is that this happens, and the plot twist at the end is that this is going to happen, and that's the story. But I can't do it that way, because that wouldn't be any fun. [General laughter]

Byron Erickson, my Editor-in-Chief over in Copenhagen, is the same guy who was the Editor-in-Chief at Gladstone, a little tiny comic book company that three people started back in Arizona in 1986. But it's the same guy I'm working for, and I work for him in the same way even though he's now the editor for the world's biggest comic publisher: I will not let him know what the story's about until he's sitting there reading it in my completed storyboard script. In other words, the story is completely finished—it's not in the final drawings—but I won't let him know

what the story is until it's in finished storyboard form. Otherwise, it wouldn't be fun for him. I'm treating him like the first reader. And this has backfired, of course. There have been times when he said, "No, we can't use that story style." Which I would have known weeks in advance, and saved myself all that work, if I did it the traditional way. Fortunately, I think that's happened only twice in the last fifteen years, and eventually I've done the story for another publisher, so I saved myself from having to eat those weeks of work. So I imagine that this is not the right way to do it.

This next tedious, boring step that I refer to is that I get down another stack of computer printer paper and I create the comic book story in approximately the size it will be printed. This is what I call the storyboard script. My drawings are finished enough so that my editor can see what the backgrounds will look like, which characters will be there, and the expressions on their faces, and what the actions are going to be. And I also letter in all of the dialogue, the sound effects, the background signs, everything. In other words, a finished comic book story, except only sort of sloppy, I guess. [Laughter] But this, to me, is tedious because it's hard to work sloppy, because it takes ages to do it. I have to letter it so he can read it, but it's hard to do the sloppy art work but not let it get so sloppy that he can't tell what it is. I used to fax that in, but nowadays I have a friend who scans it and sends it to him in an email. And it'll take a day or two for him to read it, and usually he'll just OK it, or sometimes he may have some small suggestions about a change or rearrangement of the scenes.

And, from then on, I guess it's pretty much like anybody does it. Even though I don't know how other comic book artists work, it's bound to be pretty much the same. I'll sit down with my script and pencil the whole story, starting from page one.

One difference might be my choice of paper. Most comic book publishers provide paper that's already ruled off in certain sizes with blue line. But I have always, well, since high school and college, bought my own paper, and I never stopped. I work on really expensive paper. It wasn't that expensive when I started working on it. Thirty years ago, it didn't cost that much. But now, it's $7 a sheet. I get several pages out of a sheet, but it's still expensive. It's three ply plate finish 100% rag Strathmore Bristol board, which I think is the best paper made on earth. It's archival. In other words, it'll last a thousand years. There's no acid content. I don't even know, since it's a 100% rag, if there's actual recycled cloth content in there. But it's got a real hard, shiny finish to it. And I have to cut up all my own paper. I have to rule it all, from scratch.

You're asking a writer-artist how the process goes, so you may have been just wanting to know how to write the story. But to me, it's all one continuous process. So I think I may have gone right past the end of the writing process right into the drawing process, because they're intermingled. Like I say, that storyboard script is both writing and drawing, and is right in the middle of the process.

Anyway, I do my pages in two pieces, because they use a standardized size that is so large that, if I left the sheets in one piece, it would be really difficult to reach the top tier of panels. And, since there are four tiers, they break evenly in the middle. So I draw the pages in equal halves.

So I'll pretty much pencil the entire story, then go back and ink the entire story. The penciling is pretty simple. I use a pencil. I've got one pencil, the same pencil I've used for fifteen years. It's a mechanical pencil, it's not just a big, long pencil. [General laughter]

CBM: What weight of lead do you use in your pencil, and do you vary that during the drawing process at all?

Rosa: I use one grade of lead in the old mechanical pencil—H. That's pretty hard. And it's .5 size lead. I use the same pencil for everything. Writing the dialogue out, scribbling in the storyboard-script and finally penciling the art onto the Bristol board. Never saw a reason to use any other. I have about eight different pens, but only *one* pencil. Praise God!

What I would like to ask other cartoonists is *why* on earth do they use an old-fashioned wood pencil that goes from sharp to dull and needs constant sharpening? Why not use a mechanical

pencil that never needs sharpening and always has the same sharp tip? I know other cartoonists use the old-style pencils—I see them doing it at conventions I'm invited to. But I never get into conversations with them so I don't ask such questions.

CBM: Why don't you talk more with your fellow pros?

Rosa: I seldom get into conversations since I think I would only be irritated and frustrated to hear what great royalties I should be getting if I did *any* other sort of comics. But then maybe they would be irritated and frustrated to hear how secure my job is and how famous I am in Europe? I dunno.

CBM: OK. Well, how about your inking process, what's that like?

Rosa: I've never studied how to ink, nobody's ever told me how to ink. The only art instruction I've ever had was in engineering school, so about half of my apparati are mechanical pens used for engineering diagrams. The same things I used on truss diagrams in engineering college. And then the other ones are just pens that I see at the art supply store, usually calligraphy pens, that have a wedge-shaped tip that will give me different thicknesses of line with each stroke—because I don't know how to use a brush, and I'm too old to learn. I tried one once, and I can't imagine how people have control over the things.

But when I'm inking every single page, I use seven different pens. The first one I would use is a large calligraphy pen, on close ups of faces and close ups of objects. By simple experimentation with pens I see at the store, I noticed that a calligraphy pen gives me various line thicknesses in one stroke, sorta like a brush. But it means that I must turn the paper in a certain direction to get the line thicknesses where I want them...meaning that about half the time I'm drawing upside-down...not me, but the sheet of paper. Then I'll go down to an italics pen, which is, more or less, a very small calligraphy pen. Those would be on the characters and natural things that I'm drawing. Things further in the background, I'll use...well, it says on the side of the pen it's a "drawing pen." These are all fountain pens, with an ink reservoir, so I don't have to dip constantly. With the drawing pen, which gives me a single thickness of line, I'll do all the backgrounds and smaller figures.

Then I break into my engineering tools, and for the straight lines I'll use a Rapidograph. I've got two different sizes of Rapidographs, one for the fine straight lines, of course, and one for the bigger lines. For every element on a page that I can, especially for Uncle Scrooge and things like his top hat and glasses and eyes and coins with him, I use templates that I've had since college. Because I have never been taught to draw freehand. [Laughter] So I have to lay out the characters, first of all in pencil, with a circle template, so I know they're three-and-a-half heads tall. And when it comes to inking, I have to ink Scrooge's spectacles with a mechanical Radiograph and my old circle template. Or, if he's turned sideways and his eyeglasses are at an angle, I use one of a stack of over ten different ellipse templates—sixty-degree down to ten-degree ellipse templates in five-degree increments. I find the angle that I want at the time and use that. And the same thing with his top hat and any other elements of the scene that I can. All that time, I'm inking this thing like I'm designing a truss diagram. [General laughter] After that, I might use another pen to fill in the black areas. Then, sometimes when there are some really big black areas, I might use a brush.

Then there's the white ink, which I later apply to every panel. I used to use a brush and a sort of white ink to sort of straighten or correct different lines. I'm so anal-retentive that the cross hatching has to be all even. So I'll use white ink to even up the cross hatching, and make everything just perfect. But not too long ago, I spotted these white ink pens in art stores. Those make correcting lines a lot easier. No constant dipping into a bottle.

I do have to put in the word balloons. I think that most comic artists, or so I've heard, send the art to the letterer, who inks in the panel borders and the word balloons, and he letters them. But I have to put in the word balloons myself, and I have a system for guessing how large the word balloons have to be. Because, of course, it's never going to have English words in it; it's always going to be in a foreign language. Now, with Gemstone releasing Disney comics, it'll also be in English again.

The way I size the word balloons is I'll sit there with my pencil and recite the dialogue and draw lines across the panel. If it's a long word, it's a longer line. If it's a short word, it's a shorter line. I'll talk through all these lines, and, when I say the last word, I'll look where the line is. Then I'll count the lines and I know exactly what size balloon to create for that many lines of dialogue. Like, five lines of dialogue is an inch and a quarter, six is an inch and a half, two is a half inch. So I'll pencil the lines across there, pencil in the word balloon, and hope that Finnish, Norwegian, Arabian, French, Italian and all the other languages of the world are going to fit in there. Or they're going to have to start lopping off important parts of the dialogue. There's no way to avoid it but hope that I've left enough room.

So the only thing I don't have to do is tape the top of the page to the bottom of the page. I let them do that over in Europe. It's also easier to send it, because they're smaller sheets that way.

Well, what part of the process have I skipped? I ask, because it sure doesn't happen as fast as I just explained it! [General laughter] A thirty page story might take me four months to do, from beginning to end.

CBM: And those are full days, eight-hour days, right?

Rosa: Oh yeah. At least eight-hour days. And sometimes I'll work on it at night. I used to do the white correcting at night, while watching television. David Letterman or something will be on, and I'll be sitting there with white out, evening up my crosshatch lines.

CBM: One thing that I was curious about, when you go from your storyboard version to the final art, do you ever vary from the original layout?

Rosa: Hardly ever. And I think I've realized that, as tedious as that is, doing those storyboards, it's then that I'm really plotting out the camera angles, and I'm realizing what position the characters have to be in a panel, either for the benefit of the action or benefit of speaking first, so your word balloons' tails don't crisscross. And that's when I subconsciously put the varying close ups, and distance shots in, like a director of photography in a movie. But not consciously.

People ask me how I decide how to do this, whether it's the timing of the story, or the layout of the pages, and I don't think about it. It's what I'm doing, and like "That's just the way to do it." It often frightens me, because somebody will say, "Oh, the timing in this story was perfect!" or, "The camera angle was so good!" And it'll worry me because I'm thinking it was just sheer accident that I did it like that, because I don't remember thinking about it very hard, and I'll never be able to do that again. But that's just second nature, how to position characters, or choose the camera angles. That's the way it is with me. Most cartoonists are just the same, I imagine, it just comes automatically.

I think that, with me, it comes from watching lots of old movies. I grew up reading comic books and watching old movies on television. It gets burned into your brain, somewhere, how you're supposed to set up a scene.

CBM: Almost a Zen-like state, in a way.

Rosa: Like I say, it's not just that way with me. I'm sure all cartoonists do it that way. And that's one reason why when somebody starts asking me how they can learn to be a cartoonist...I try not to get into those discussions, because I don't think I have any good advice. Because I never tried to become a cartoonist—I just stumbled into it. But, at the same time, it seems to me that you can't study to be a cartoonist. It just has to be something you practiced when you were a kid. Like, with me, I spent my childhood creating comic books for my own amusement. Nobody would see them but me, but that's how I would entertain myself. So I think it's something that has to be second nature to be able to do it subconsciously.

So, when I'm doing those storyboard scripts, that probably is very usefully spent time, deciding exactly how each panel is supposed to be laid out. And, to answer your question, I find that I virtually never change anything.

CBM: Does the scripted dialogue ever change much?

Rosa: Oh yeah. The words in the panels, sometimes, when I look at them again over the next two or three months, I look at them so often I'll think of better ways to phrase the dialogue. Or, certainly when I'm trying to fit all them damn words in these little, tiny panels, I'll come up with a shorter way, a more concise way, to say the same thing.

Although that is something that I left out of describing my process earlier. As I'm drawing the story, I'm rewriting the story, here and there, and I'm making notes in red on my original pencil storyboard script pages. And then, after I've sent the art work off to the publisher, there is one last thing I do. I make copies of the art. I always have to make very careful copies of all of the art that I send, because someday the plane's just going to crash in Greenland or Iceland or something, and it's going to be lost. Because I want to get paid for the last three, four months' worth of work, I have to have backups of all my art. But I also make copies of those copies, and then write on these copies any script changes or anything that I've changed from the original storyboards.

I never have to do any typing, whether on a typewriter or a computer, because that's something else the editor does; he types up the script for me in the particular form that Egmont uses amongst all their thirty different publishing branches. So I don't have to worry about having it typed up, I just have to be sure that he can read my storyboard script, and receives my rewrite.

CBM: When you're doing the storyboards and the finished pages, do you put the balloons in after the drawing's done?

Rosa: No. That's the first thing I put in each panel, the word balloons.

Again, I don't know how other writers work, and I don't know how other comics are done. But in these kinds of comics, there has to be a definite beginning, middle and ending. They're so completely self-contained that every single panel is essential. If you took one panel out of one of my stories, the entire train of logic would collapse. Every panel is essential to the story because I'm writing sixty page scripts and squeezing them into thirty pages, if you cut one panel out, or one word balloon, there's a break in the logic. So I have to make sure, even before the picture will fit, I have to make sure that word balloon is in there, and every thought that needs to be expressed in that panel to move on to the next panel has got to be in there.

One big discovery that I made, or realization that dawned on me, was that the word balloon doesn't have to be in just that one panel; it can flow over into the next panel. So it can cross the panel border, as long as the tail of the balloon still points to the right duck. But I try not to let the word balloons take up more than a third of the panel. These are tiny panels. All other comic books are three tiers of panels, and sometimes one panel for two pages. I'm doing, basically, eight to fifteen panels per page in my general layout. Sometimes—like once or twice in a story, but usually just once—I'll have a half page panel for the big climax scene. That's as big as the panels get, and as big as it can get, because I'm using a half a sheet of paper.

I frequently have as many as fifteen panels on a page, so you can see how tiny these panels are getting. Still, the words have got to fit. So it's the balloons that have to go in first, and the drawing

fits around those balloons.

CBM: How important a consideration is coloring to you? Does that even enter into any of this?

Rosa: Well, mostly it's just frustration, because the company I work for, they're colorists are computer technicians. These are weekly comic books, and they're filled with many different stories every week, week in and week out, decade in and decade out. They hate it when people call what they do an assembly line, but it really is. Their computer technicians color this stuff very, very ably. They don't miss anything. In fact, computer coloring is very nice in one sense, that if there are lots of intricate items in a scene, they can blow it up, they can color it, and they can shrink it back down on their computer screen. They don't have to color a crowd scene all light blue or something, like years ago.

But the problem with Egmont in the past, and hopefully not in the future, is that they make no attempt to put any drama into the coloring. They don't do lighting effects, for instance. And this applies to sound effects, as well. They have no ability, or possibly no desire, to make creative sound effects. And I hope they realize that really good coloring sets a proper mood. If it's a swamp, or a graveyard at night, that's really important to the story. In fact, it improves the story so much. Or sound effects. The only kind of sound effects they will put in, it looks like a child with a marking pen added it to the art work. It's just black lines. And I guess it's because they just don't have the people on the staff. Yeah, these are the best selling comic books in Europe, but they're also the fastest produced comic books in Europe.

The sound effects, and the lettering also, and the coloring I have no connection with. I wish I could influence those aspects, but I really can't. I can only hope I can have some sort of influence, or depend more on the coloring, when the story's reprinted in a country like Italy, or Greece, or France. And, of course, now in America. I know when one of my stories comes to America, it will not only be well-colored, but often it's lettered by the world's greatest letterer. I know I don't have to worry about the lettering when my stories are done here.

What I refer to is the fact that Todd Klein is a big Carl Barks fan, and has always expressed an enjoyment of my stories, and he even—and this is as long ago as over ten years ago—called up Gladstone and asked if he could letter my stories. And we said, "Sure!" And he's back to doing that now, with Gemstone. And I'm really proud of that.

See, the lettering with Egmont is typeset, which to me is totally wrong for a comic book. But it's traditional for fifty years there that word balloons have all been typeset. And I remember when I first started visiting them over there, I'd try to talk them out of that. I'd say, "The comic book page, the whole page, should be hand made—including the lettering. Comic book dialogue should be lettered by hand. It should all look natural." And they said to me, "Well, we think it's more important for the child to learn to read words written in a script he's going to see when he grows up." I said, "Uh…OK." I couldn't argue with that. [Laughter] I mean, the child is not going to grow up and start reading newspapers or magazines that are written in comic book lettering. They stumped me. I had no comeback for that argument. But that didn't change the fact that a comic book should be hand lettered. So sound effects are poorly done. The lettering is typeset. The coloring…. You should see the coloring notes to my editor that I put on my script rewrites. I've gotten to the point now where, say for instance that they're going down stairs into a dungeon, with my red marking pen, in huge letters, I'll say, "DARK! IT'S DARK! THEY'RE IN A DUNGEON, AT MIDNIGHT, WITH A CANDLE! FOR THE LOVE OF GOD IT'S DARK!" He won't ignore it, but the colorists will ignore that. They'll color it just like they're in broad daylight.

I did a story just now, the reason I said they have a candle in a dungeon, I think two-thirds of that story took place in dungeons under Castle McDuck and the characters are carrying candles. And Egmont sent the story over here to Gemstone to have Susan Daigle-Leach color it, because they knew she was an artist, not a computer technician. But over there, they have to have computer technicians do the color, because they need to get done fast. I guess that's the reason why.

So, your question is "How much of a consideration is the coloring?" It's not a consideration—it's a frustration. Because I know I just don't have any way to influence the colorist to help my story look good, because, like I was saying, a good colorist can improve the story a hundred percent, and emphasize the mood that I'm trying to achieve. And that causes me a lot of extra work, because every time I'm doing a story where it's dark, or I want some dramatic lighting, I know I have to put it in there, and I have to put it in there with crosshatching. There's so many ink lines in my stories compared to the other duck comics, and it's just because I'm trying so hard to get a certain mood in certain panels, and I have this feeling that if I don't do it in ink, it's not going to be done in color. Now, in the story I'm referring to, I did know that Susan was going to color it, so I left out a lot of my needless, irritating crosshatching, because she'd take care of it with good lighting effects.

CBM: It could be argued that, in many ways, you're at the pinnacle of your career. Which brings up the question of whether you feel there's anything you feel has been left undone, or that you haven't done that you really, really want to tackle?

Rosa: Huh, I never thought of that. Being at the pinnacle of my career, that's occurred to me over the last ten years, that there's no place to go beyond where I am. You can't make extra money in this line of work. No matter how much my stories are reprinted all over the world, no matter how popular I get, I don't make extra money. That's one kind of

frustrating thing about this job; it's the "glass ceiling," as they say. There's nowhere I can go from here. Not that it's bad, but that's it.

Still, I think just last month, I heard about more new Don Rosa book series that are coming out around the world. I found out about one in Portugal, a series in Brazil, and another series in Indonesia. In other words, these are books devoted entirely to my work. I don't get a penny out of this. The publishers and Disney get paid the royalties for this stuff. [Laughter] So, yeah, I'm at the pinnacle of my career, except there's no where to go in these comics. You don't make more money depending on how much more it's being printed.

But the only thing I think about is there are so many more stories I want to tell. There are people offering me jobs, saying, "Why don't you take a break and do this?" Like the people who publish *The Simpsons* comics are big Duck fans, and they want me to write some *Simpsons* comics. And I try to make sure that they know how flattered I am that somebody would ask me something like that, but if I did one *Simpsons* comic that would be one Duck comic that I would not get accomplished by the time that I have to quit.

And I'm so slow. I'm certainly not trying to match Carl Barks. There's no way you could match him, anyway. How many thousands of stories did he do? I do like two or three stories a year. He would do twelve stories in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*, four stories in the quarterly *Uncle Scrooge*, and then he'd do a story in the Christmas annual, or the *Vacation Parade* annual. That's nearly twenty stories a year! I barely get three done, so it's not like I'm ever going to catch up to him. He did it for twenty-five years. I hope I can hold out that long. I've been at it for about seventeen, but have just done about as many as he did in his first three years! [General laughter]

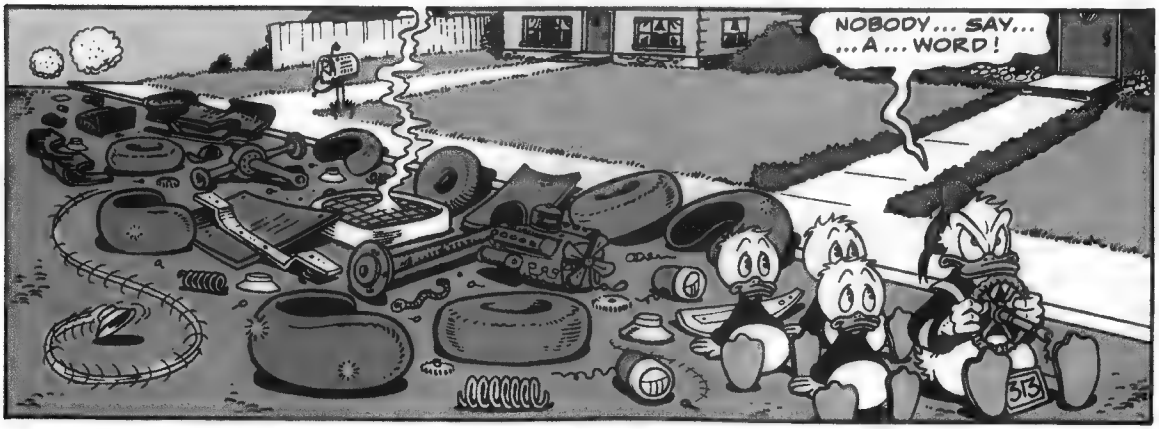
So, as far as what I want to achieve, I just want to get some more stories done. There's nothing else to do in the Duck comics. You can't tell a story that would change everything. But then, I wouldn't want to. At the end of each story the Duck world has to be exactly the way it was when you started the story. So I don't know. I would like to think of something to achieve, but I'm just always thinking about how I can get more work done.

I get slowed down by my popularity. Because my stories have this strange popularity all over the world, I get called upon to do interviews for newspapers in Brazil or in Indonesia, or the French want me to do pin-ups—nice, spicy French pin-ups. [General laughter] Not too spicy, because they've got Carl Barks' Ducks in them, in the French Disney comics. They have special, full page illustrations in every issue. I get called upon to do that. I get called upon to go on trips to help promote somebody's comics, a European book or something. And last Friday, I spent the whole day signing 1200 title pages for a German hardback of my work. And then I spent all of last week writing texts for a Norwegian hardback collection of my work, introductions to the stories.

So, it seems that the more popular I am, the less actual comic stories I get done each year. It's amusing to consider—the artists whose work is perhaps not as popular for whatever reason, while I am doing interviews and traveling and answering fan-mail, they keep working. So, does my popularity cause me to earn *less* money instead of *more* in this system? I don't think it's normally supposed to work that way, is it?

What I'd really rather be doing is stories. [Laughter] That's the only reason they want the pin-ups. That's the only reason they want me to go on their promotional tours for them, or write these texts, is because of the stories. But I haven't been able to find time to work on a story in probably a month and a half. I hope to start tomorrow, as a matter of fact. I got the last couple of things done today, a piece of art work I promised one publisher, or a fan. So tomorrow, I'm going to sit down and stare at my notebook and say, "What am I going to do next?"

And, as of this moment, I don't know! I don't have deadlines, I don't have assignments. I just sit down and say, "Well, what am I going to do next? What would be fun to do?"



Cartoonist as Auteur: The Genius of Schulz and Larson

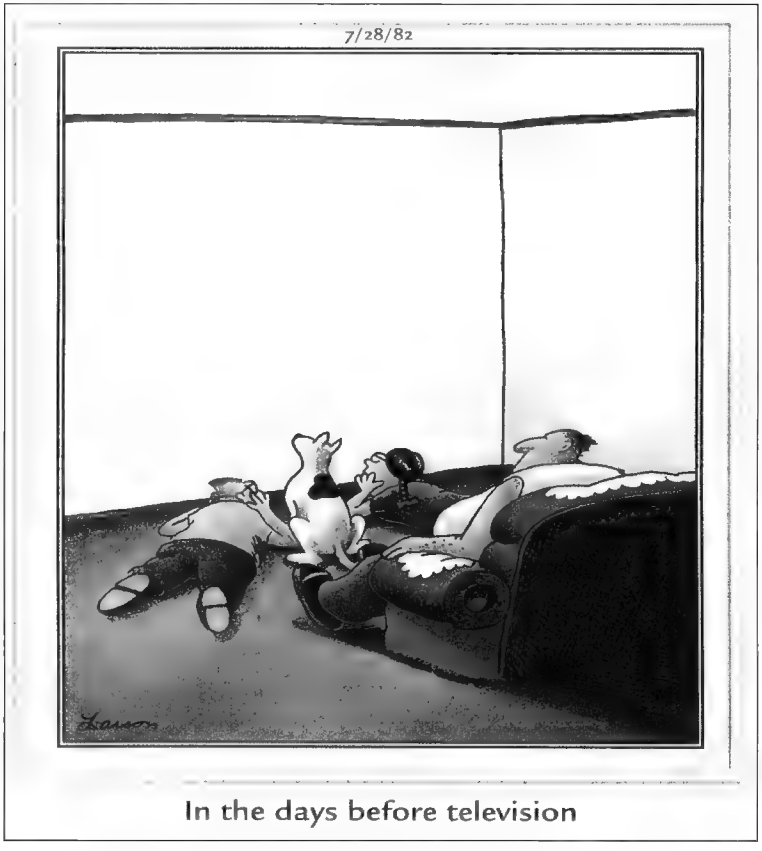
When we talk, as we sometimes do, about "works of genius," we are usually mulling over one of two things—either the work itself, or the genius. When it's the work, then "genius" is being used to describe the quality of the work. But when we're talking about "genius," we're generally speaking of the person who created the work, a single creative intelligence. One person, not a committee. A committee, as a rule, is not a genius.

Among the genre of the cartooning arts, comic books (or, as I call them sometimes, when in the giddy grip of a fit of pedantry, "paginated cartoon strips") have historically been produced by committees—red-eyed crews of pencilers, inkers, scripters, letterers, layout designers, colorists, and on and on—all pulling their individual oars of the galley. The sleek vessel skims through the waves but we can't tell, for sure, which of the oarsmen is pulling the hardest or the most skillfully.

The creative mode here is a convenience of commerce, devised solely to shovel great quantities of material into the maw of a production schedule. And that brings us to our first paradox: The comic book format, with length coupled to layout—with the potential, in other words, to vary the traditional grid of panels for dramatic emphasis—is the most potent of the cartooning forms. But the comic book has been, historically, the most impaired—chiefly because of the committee-method of production. Individual genius does not thrive at the oars of the slave galley.

Newspaper comic strips, on the other hand, have traditionally been the province of individual creative intelligences, lone cartoonists laboring in solitude (until they start earning enough to hire assistants to perform the more odious chores, lettering, say, or filling in solid blacks or ruling borders). And yet newspaper comic strips are the most constricted of creative arenas. As Will Eisner once succinctly put it: producing a newspaper comic strip is like trying to conduct an orchestra in a phone booth. And so in their newspaper incarnation, comics haven't the resources to exploit the medium's potential.

Despite this unhappy fact, we are more likely to find cartooning geniuses, the individuals, among comic strip cartoonists, not comic book cartoonists. Partly that's because the comic strip, cramped and constricted though it is, responds more readily to individual inspiration than the comic book, the



In the days before television

Late at night, and without permission, Reuben would often enter the nursery and conduct experiments in static electricity.

usual production means of which can force individuals to accommodate the demands of the rest of the creative team. Partly, it's because, historically, the pay has been better in newspaper syndication than in comic books: comic strips, then, attract creative individuals seeking the best financial situation. And partly that's because comic strips, arriving on the publication landscape at least thirty years before comic books, had a head start in recruiting talent. And comic books, the late-comers, also occupied a cultural ghetto for a long time, and the most talented artists tended to veer away from that neighborhood.

Exceptions, however, proliferate. Not all comic strips are works of genius. Not all comic books are artistic trash. The comic book medium has been enhanced by the efforts of individual geniuses—Will Eisner, Jack Cole, John Stanley, George Carlson, Carl Barks, Harvey Kurtzman and others, no question. The list is quite long, considering—but not as long as the list of comic strip cartooning geniuses. As a general rule, until quite recently, the individual creative giants in the cartooning arts have labored in the cramped quarters of the phone booth.

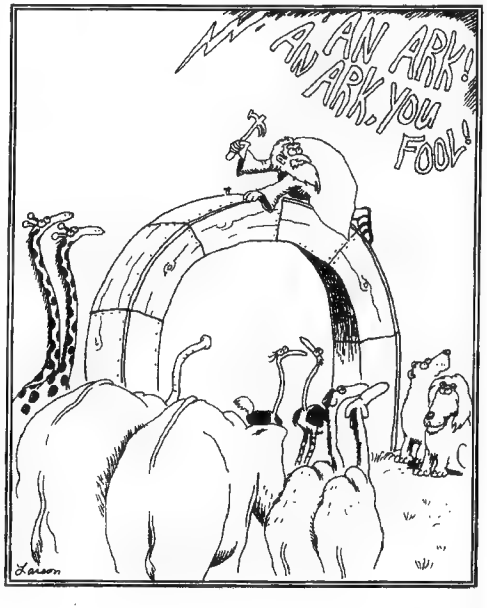
There, they can work alone, both writing and drawing the phantoms of their imaginations, unencumbered by the need to compromise with any other creative intelligences. They blend words and pictures, yoking them together to create the meanings of their mini-narratives. In the best of these pictorial narratives, neither the words nor the pictures mean the same by themselves as they do in tandem. Working together, they achieve a meaning neither reaches alone without the other. That, I submit, is what a cartoonist does: he or she blends the verbal and the visual.

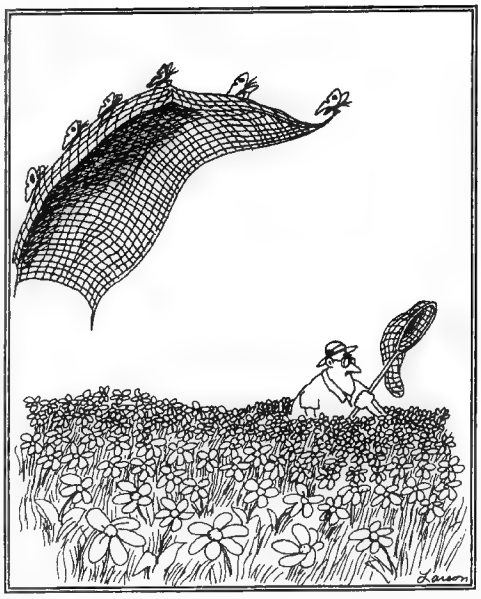
This dictum of mine has been ferociously misunderstood, sometimes in all directions at once. It is not, for example, a definition of comics. Not exactly. Not exclusively. It leans in that direction, but it doesn't quite fall over. And there are excellent comics that do not, panel by panel, blend word and picture in ways that make them mutually dependent for a new and somewhat different meaning. Excellence in these instances is achieved by other means (which are extolled in tedious detail in a book of mine, *The Art of the Funnies*, about which, we need say no more here).

The verbal-visual formulation was originally intended as the first step along the pathway of criteria for evaluating the artistry of comics. If you approach a comic book or comic strip by looking for the ways the words and pictures blend to achieve meaning, then you are looking into the central dynamic of the medium's mechanism. And you are also closer to the creative process than you are if you consider "story" by itself. Or characterization. Or pure technical ability or drawing technique.

Does a cartoonist think about how to make the meaning of the words dependent upon understanding the picture and vice versa? Surely not. The creative process for the cartoonist is inherent: words and pictures blend as he devises. The blending is the process. It is the unconscious part of the creative act for a cartoonist. And that's partly why works of genius in cartooning tend to be the works of individual creative intelligence. The blend of word and picture is inherent in the creative act of cartooning but not, necessarily, in the labors of a committee, one member of which may think of backgrounds, another of lettering. One among them, usually, thinks something like a cartoonist, yoking pictures to words for a meaning neither achieves alone without the other, but the most powerful and dramatic and telling blends are those taken from conception to completion by the individual who imagined them.

To belabor the subject at somewhat greater length, let us consider the work of two newspaper cartoonists who are acknowledged geniuses of the medium—Gary Larson and Charles M. Schulz. Neither, as it happens, suffered much from the constrictions of the newspaper





vehicle.

Larson, we may assume, suffered not at all: his cartooning was done in a single panel, the "gag cartoon," which, by its very nature, cannot be constricted: it can be reduced, reproduced at ever decreasing dimensions, but the functional character of the single-panel cartoon remains the same, regardless of size.

"I have a single-image brain," Larson explained. "I drew single-image cartoons."

He drew *The Far Side* for fourteen years, from December 31, 1979 until January 1, 1995, with a year off in 1989, and all of them—all 4,337 of them (plus a few extras)—have been reprinted in the most colossal cartoon reprinting project of the year (last year) by Andrews McMeel. *The Complete Far Side* takes two hardback, slip-cased volumes, a total of 1,250 giant 9x13-inch pages of highly coated stock, to do the job. The result, a publishing landmark, weighs 18 pounds and costs $135 (less through Amazon).

The volumes are extravagant productions: every page has a multi-colored background, and many of the cartoons are reprinted in full color, fugitives, doubtless, from their re-incarnation as greeting cards after having debuted as cartoons in newspapers (1,900 of them at *The Far Side's* peak). The books proceed in chronological order, year by year, and Larson introduces each year with an almost irrelevant (but highly appreciated) essay that explores some obscure crevice of his brain or attitude.

Larson did not set out to be a cartoonist. After graduating from Washington State University in 1973, he thought he'd go into advertising, but when he couldn't find satisfactory employment at it, he turned to music, playing a banjo and working in a music store in Seattle. In 1976, he sold six cartoons about animals to a nature magazine, *Pacific Search*, whereupon Larson started cartooning as a regular vocation. His work, now entitled *Nature's Way,* appeared once a week for approximately the next two years in the *Seattle Times*, and when it was cancelled (due to complaints, it is said, about the "unnatural selection of the subject matter"), Larson was picked up by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and syndicated forthwith by Chronicle Features, which began selling the feature as *Gary Land*, a name soon changed to *The Far Side*. In 1984, syndication was taken over by Universal Press.

Larson's cartoons make perfect illustrations of the verbal-visual blending that is the essence of the cartooning process.

Here, for example, is a drawing of a father, seated in an easy chair and looking directly in front of him towards a blank wall; his children and the family dog are lying on the floor in front of him, and they, too, stare, enraptured, at the blank wall.

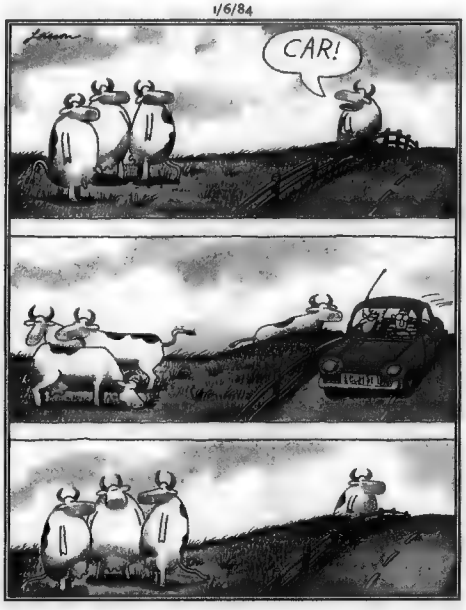
Nothing amusing in that picture, right? Here's the caption: "In the days before television."

The picture presents us with a puzzle; the caption, the solution. We glance at the puzzle, then the solution—and when the "explanation" dawns upon us, as it does suddenly, we are surprised, and then amused by the ingenious way Larson has explained the seemingly inexplicable picture.

Larson is master of the gag cartoon, the haiku of cartooning: every syllable of it—every visual element, every word—filling a definite, essential, function. If any element fails to do its job, the entire tiny edifice collapses.

Here's another. We see a nursery of newborns in a hospital. A large, lumpish man, whose garb (including a key ring on his belt) suggests he is not a regular worker in the nursery, is holding a baby next to his side and apparently jiggling the infant, or rubbing it against his side. Above him, on the ceiling, are two more babies, stuck there, it appears. The caption explains all: "Late at night, and without permission, Reuben would enter the nursery and conduct experiments in static electricity."

Until the last two words, the puzzle remains; the last two words draw the



"Now calm down, Barbara. ... We haven't looked everywhere yet, and an elephant can't hide in here forever."

curtain and reveal the secret of the picture. Exquisite.

Larson's cartoons, in which animals, insects, and humans seem bent upon exchanging roles in order to pounce, unexpectedly, upon readers, display a sense of humor that comics scholar Dennis Wepman and others describe as "macabre, zany, weird, whimsical, fiendish, twisted, odd, and 'the stuff of a demented imagination.'" Well, yes; but there's more to it. Bizarre is not enough by itself.

In much of his work, Larson relies upon the time-sanctified devices of the humorist.

1. Application of a pat phrase to an unusual situation. A startlingly skinny couple and their equally thin son watch a fat couple and their fat child and dog moving in next door. Says the skinny wife: "There goes the neighborhood."

2. Taking something literally. Two men, one a guest in the other's home, watch a tiny woman walk by, and the guest says, "... and this must be the little woman."

3. Role reversal. A dog is driving a car, and a man is hanging out the window with his tongue out.

4. Misapprehension of words. An old white-bearded man in a robe is building an arch out of wood as several pairs of animals watch. From the sky come the following words: "An ark, an ark, you fool!"

To such more-or-less standard routines, Larson very early added a twist, the twist that gave his work its distinction. He began to dwell upon strange juxtapositions.

Here is a man with a net, looking for butterflies in a field of flowers. Over his head, as yet unseen by him, is a huge net, held aloft by several butterflies. You might call this theme in Larson's work "the revenge of the species," any number of species.

My favorite Larson cartoon is in three panels. In the first, we see several cows standing erect on their hind legs in a field next to a highway. One of the cows, obviously a lookout for the herd, turns to the others and says, "Car!" In the next panel, the cows are on all fours, like normal cows, while an automobile rolls by. By the last panel, the car has disappeared, and the cows are standing on their hind legs again, resuming their conversation while the lookout stands guard.

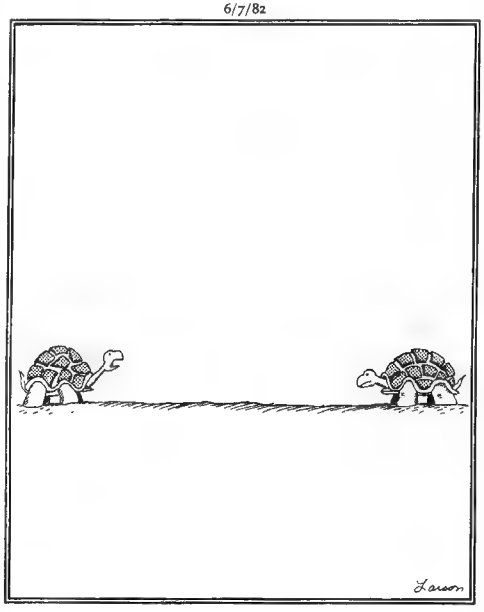
What's going on here?

Larson has given us a glimpse into the metaphysics of existence, the illusion of reality upon which successful living relies. The comedy springs from his questioning the way we think about reality. But it depends upon our sharing a sophisticated notion.

We customarily accept as "true" (or actual or factual) the things we perceive with our own eyes. We assume that whatever aspects of reality we don't, at the moment, actually see nonetheless conform to whatever we have perceived in similar phenomena.

We are accustomed to seeing cows on all fours. We assume they are always like that. But Larson suggests they aren't—that just over the horizon of our perception there is another reality, one we'll never see. In this one, cows stand erect on their hind legs and converse among themselves. We don't realize this because, as he shows us in this cartoon, the cows are clever enough to maintain the illusion whenever humans are around.

This cartoon is the coda for me of Larson's peculiar comedic sensibility. The reality he sees as he sits and stares at a blank piece of drawing paper—the sudden juxtaposition of two seemingly unrelated things—is a reality just over the horizon, unseen except by special dispensation. Larson is the dispensation. His gift is the gift of perspective, of attitude. Moreover, wherever he looks, it seems, death and dismemberment lurk just around the corner of his perception.



"This is it, Carl! ... We head straight at each other and the first one to veer off is 'chicken.'"

Steve Martin, in one of his several attempts at a Foreword that pepper the opening pages of Volume 1 of the *Complete Far Side*, captures the essential Larson: "I am sorry to report, given the occasion of this very important publication, that many of the scenes depicted in this book are actually false.... It was a small thought that grew to a big one: Was Gary Larson just making a lot of this stuff up? Though many believe that chickens talk, does it necessarily follow that likewise so do ducks and dogs?"

Larson, attempting to explain himself to us in these same pages, says his upbringing accustomed him to thinking in single-imagery humor rather than, say, witty humor, the humor of banter, of conversation.

"Physical comedy," he says, "—especially if it contained psychological overtones, such as those old chestnuts fear and humiliation—pervaded our home like a poltergeist.... A single drawing is all I ever needed.... *The Far Side* was more of an attitude, a distillation of life that came from growing up in a family that had a deep, sincere appreciation for the many uses of a good gorilla mask."

He was terrified, he says, when, as he presented his cartoons to the editor of the Chronicle Feature Syndicate in 1979, that worthy started talking to him about doing a comic strip. Not a single-panel cartoon, but a strip of panels. Larson realized he could not do that. A comic strip, he explains, requires wit to create banter. "You need characters like a sitcom needs them, talking to one another, setting things up, leading to that rim shot in the last panel when something clever or unexpected is said."

That, Larson says, is not his style of comedy.

But it is the style of Charles Schulz, another auteur whose work epitomizes the visual-verbal nature of cartooning.

Schulz was a Midwesterner, born in the heartland of St. Paul, Minnesota, the shy and only son of a barber. Nicknamed "Sparky" after the comic strip horse Spark Plug in *Barney Google*, he took a course in art from a local correspondence school, and during World War II he was drafted and served overseas in the infantry. After V-J Day, he returned to the Twin Cities and took a staff position with the correspondence school and freelanced in his spare time, lettering comic strips for a locally-produced Catholic magazine and, eventually, producing a cartoon feature called *Li'l Folks* for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

The feature ran once a week, a boxed grouping of single-panel cartoons about the antics of little children who seemed a

The End (Act One)

The Far Side
10-29
The role of the large woman in horn-rimmed glasses was played by Arlene Carmichael. Arlene had previously auditioned for several other cartoons before her "break" in "The Far Side."
Various aliens, monsters, sharks and large mammals were played by Frank Slavens and John McCosKer. (Earlier this year, both characters went down in a giant squid suit and were never seen again.)
Playing a multitude of parts (cavemen, cowboys, etc.) was Daryl Simmons. Daryl plans to try out for an upcoming role in "Beetle Bailey."
In the role of "the cow" was Jessica Van Horn, from Fenwick Farms.
Making his cartoon debut as "the nerdy little kid" was Jerry Miller. Jerry was originally turned down for the part of Sluggo in "Nancy."
In various "scientific" roles was Andrew Figg. Regretably, shortly before his stint with "The Far Side" ended, Andrew was erased.
All the protozoans came from a drainage ditch on the outskirts of Shreveport, LA. Most of them now live in a Beverly Hills petri dish.
Cockroaches, ants, flies, spiders, slugs and assorted invertebrates were all set free but came back into the house.
Special thanks to Luann Thatcher, who designed the black border.

The Far Side cast

These are the last two **Far Side** cartoons Larson did before his 14-month sabbatical in 1989. [As published in the **Comics Buyer's Guide** in 1988.]

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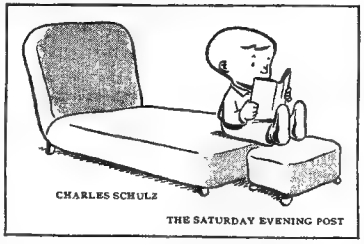


docile and she was b Barrie ha and gums her with back to L a $1320 p Barrie shortly aft several ye some gang racing ring cago. The Indiana,

Here is the first Schulz cartoon to be published in the **Saturday Evening Post** (shown at the actual diminutive size of its publication in the magazine, where it was surrounded by text as were all **Post** cartoons).

Schulz was also sending single-panel cartoons to national magazines, breaking into print at the *Saturday Evening Post* with the May 29, 1948 issue. And he submitted ideas for cartoons to feature newspaper syndicates.

Early in 1950, he attracted the attention of United Feature, whose operatives saw in Schulz's tiny figures a novel marketing ploy. Because Schulz's characters were small, the syndicate decided to tailor the strip's dimensions to the kids' size—a maneuver that would, they believed, appeal to newspaper editors seeking to conserve space. Schulz's strip would have the same horizontal measure as all strips but would be shallower vertically.

And syndicate factotums named the strip, too: calling it *Peanuts* underscored its size. It was a name Schulz hated, and he hated it unreservedly, relentlessly, all his life.

Schulz's drawing style was simpler than that used in most humorous comic strips of the day. The simple style survived reduction to the diminutive dimension better, and when the strip proved popular, its simple graphic treatment set a new fashion for gag strips. The unfortunate fact about simple drawing styles is that clumsy, inept drawing ability seems, to the unsophisticated artistic eye of most newspaper editors, to be just another variety of simplicity. So pretty soon the funnies were awash in strips drawn in a minimalist manner, often little more than primitive scrawls with no redeeming aesthetic quality at all.

The humor of *Peanuts* also set new standards. With the first volume of the Fantagraphics heroic 25-volume reprint project before us *(The Complete Peanuts: 1950-52*, 350 6x8-inch pages in hardback book; $28.95), we can see that from its beginning, the strip appeared quite simply to be about children who often spoke in a remarkably adult way. The pictures show us children; the words suggest adult preoccupations. The humor arose from the dichotomy between the speakers and what they said, between the visual and the verbal presentations.

To this, Schulz brought a unique cast

Funnies Farrago

[continued from page 65]

bit more sophisticated than most cartoon children. The entire run of *Li'l Folks*, all 135 of them, has, at last, been entirely reprinted in *Charles M. Schulz: Li'l Beginnings* (300 8.5x11-inch pages in paperback by the Schulz Museum, $30; www.SchulzMuseum.org), copiously annotated by Schulz scholar Derrick Bang, a windfall for Schulz fans and cartooning researchers.

The kids in *Li'l Folks* are cute because of the way Schulz drew them. They are all tiny, and Schulz distorted proportions—giving them round heads as big as their bodies—which makes them seem even more diminutive. And tiny is cute.

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT, CHARLIE BROWN?
CANDY BARS... I'VE GOT TWO... WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE ONE?
ONE ISN'T ENOUGH... I WANT BOTH OF THEM!
SCHULZ
I ADMIRE FRANKNESS IN A PERSON..

The punch line illustrates *Peanuts'* basic principle of humor in its early years: the application of adult jargon to the concerns of children.

PEANUTS
LUCY, THAT'S THE FIFTH TIME TODAY YOU'VE STRUCK OUT!
YOU'RE SWINGING TOO HARD
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MEET THE BALL
THAT'S WHAT I TRIED TO DO...
MY BAT WAS THERE, BUT THE BALL DIDN'T SHOW UP!
SCHULZ

Here, the formula is reversed, presenting a child-like response to adult-like coaching.

SOB
SNIF SNIF
WHY IS YOUR BABY BROTHER CRYING? IS HE WATCHING A SAD PROGRAM?
NO...
CLICK!
HE JUST GETS DEPRESSED BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO TURN THE SET ON...
SIGH
SCHULZ

Schulz was proudest of having perfected what he called the humor of "the slight incident."

of characters, each with a distinct personality trait or quirk that offered additional possibilities for variation on the initial themes. Schroeder had a fixation on Beethoven. Lucy was a chronic complainer. Linus was a precocious genius. "Pig Pen" was a kid who couldn't stay clean: no matter what he did, he wound up dirty from head to toe. And Charlie Brown was a loser.

While the essential element of the strip's humor arises from the dichotomy between the speakers and what they speak, between the world of children and that of adults, the charm of *Peanuts* and its introspective greatness lies not in its pointing to the difference between adults and children, but in its emphasizing the similarity.

The achievement at the source of *Peanuts'* appeal is the trick Schulz played with the very nature of his medium. The pictures show us small children. But their speech reveals that they are infected with fairly adult insecurities and quirks and other often disheartening preoccupations.

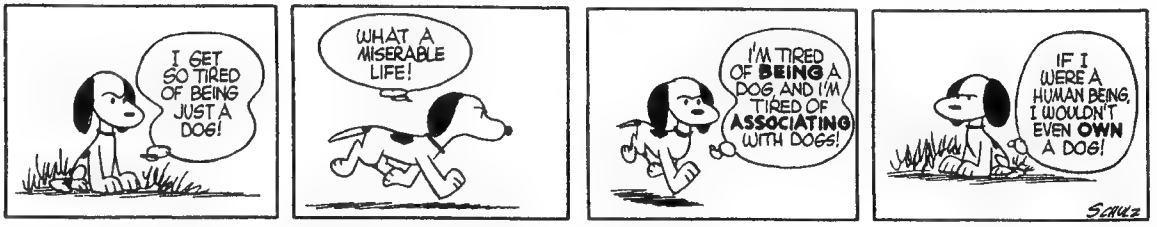
The dichotomy between picture and word permits us to laugh about heartbreak. Because the *Peanuts* characters are kids, their personality flaws don't seem all that important to us. Kids' problems are always relatively trivial compared to grown-ups' problems. As adults, we tend to dismiss kids' problems. Or we chuckle because those problems seem so monumental to the kids plagued by them. We—older and wiser—see that these problems are actually small problems. We understand that they will go away.

Even as we chuckle at the *Peanuts* gang, however, we realize that the same preoccupations that haunt them often stalk us as adults. Because these are kids, we can see the humor in their dilemmas. And because we can recognize their dilemmas as ours, we can see the humor in our predicaments, too. Before we know it, we are laughing at ourselves. With a giggle, we put our cares behind us (or beside us) and go on with our lives.

That's how Schulz worked his trick. And he worked it so well that it made his comic strip the most famous and beloved comic strip in the world.

Besides that, his kids, with their big round heads and Lilliputian bodies, are just plain funny-looking. And that makes their having problems all the more hilarious: that these goofy-looking characters could have real-life problems is incongruous and therefore funny.

If it weren't for the funny pictures—and the comedy that is born in the dichotomy of pictures and words—*Peanuts* would be pretty discouraging. Charlie Brown never gets a Valentine from the little red-haired girl; his baseball team never wins; his kite never flies. On the basis of this evidence, we have a strip about unrequited love and unrealized aspiration. But Charlie Brown always comes back. Every fall, he tries


I GET SO TIRED OF BEING JUST A DOG!
WHAT A MISERABLE LIFE!
I'M TIRED OF BEING A DOG AND I'M TIRED OF ASSOCIATING WITH DOGS!
IF I WERE A HUMAN BEING, I WOULDN'T EVEN OWN A DOG!
SCHULZ

Snoopy evolved from a dog who hated being a dog to a dog who could be anything his imagination required.

to kick that football once again—knowing, no doubt (how could he not?), that Lucy will snatch it away at the last minute and that he (and his ambition) will come crashing down one more time.

And Charlie Brown is not the only resilient loser in the strip. When Peppermint Patty joined the ensemble in the summer of 1966, she seemed the juvenile incarnation of a hip swinger. But her expertise—which soon turned out to be an abiding interest in athletics—brought her no success in the other principal arena of youthful endeavor, the schoolroom. She is smart and bright but not academically inclined, and her teacher's inability to reach this child is Schulz's fierce indictment of the American educational system.

TRUE! FALSE! TRUE! FALSE!
THIS ISN'T A "TRUE OR FALSE" TEST, SIR...IT'S MULTIPLE CHOICE..
© 1992 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.
IT'S TOO LATE NOW..
5-19
TRUE! FALSE! TRUE! FALSE!
Schulz

Undaunted, Patty forges ahead as best she can, an indictment of public school in her native land.

Against this somewhat ordinary and certainly unglamorous assessment of the human condition, Schulz balanced the fantasy life of Snoopy, whose seeming brilliant success at every endeavor reassures us that life is not only about disappointment and endurance: it is also about dreams and the sustaining power of the imagination.

Snoopy embodies the strip's constantly questing spirit better than any of the other characters. During the sixties, Snoopy rose to such prominence that he threatened to take over the strip. The humor here springs from the dog's preoccupation with pursuits normally followed by humans; again, a dichotomy is at the core of the mechanism. And, again, it is the dichotomy of the non-sequitur: from the evidence presented to our eyes (a dog), it does not follow that we will be witnessing activity usually associated with humans (flying an airplane, writing a novel).

Snoopy's charm, Schulz recognized, resides in the child-like combination of innocence and egotism that define his personality and propel him into new and unlikely circumstances again and again. He never tires, never gives up. And neither does Charlie Brown.

The vulnerability of childhood with its alienation and insecurities was the foundation of Schulz's comedic sense, and that sense reshaped the cartooning universe. Assessing Schulz's work and its impact upon cartooning, Lynn Johnston (of *For Better or For Worse*) writes about her friend and idol that he "had the courage to talk about loneliness and loss, about disappointment and anger. In so doing, he profoundly influenced a new generation of comic artists and readers as well. It was rebellion in reverse; impact with understatement and an honesty that healed even when it hurt."

Perhaps "unwittingly," she goes on, Schulz "helped to unlock a nation's inhibitions. ... He made us look at and into ourselves.... Until this funny, gentle, and simply drawn work came to be a part of our culture, we didn't talk too openly about deep personal feelings. You were a failure if you did."

Schulz's influence was immense. In recognition of it, *Editor & Publisher* named him one of only two cartoonists (the other was editoonist Herblock) in its roster of the 25 "most influential newspaper people of the 20th century," where he joined a line-up that began with Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst.

With Schulz's example before them, subsequent generations of America's cartoonists would make authentic human experience the basis of their approach to comedy and cartooning. Without Schulz, Ellie Patterson in *For Better or For Worse* would not have lost her mother. Or the family dog. Without Schulz, newspapers would have no room for Patrick McDonnell's gentle whimsy in *Mutts*.

Without Schulz, *Doonesbury's* B.D. would not have lost his leg, fighting in Iraq.

Our other stripping auteur, Gary Larson, also has disciples. Without *The Far Side*, we'd have less of the bizarre in single-panel cartoon humor—no *Bizarro* by Dan Piraro, no *Ballard Street* by Jerry van Amerongen, no *Speed Bump* by Dave Coverly, no *Close to Home* by John McPherson.

None of these cartoonists are imitating Larson; he is, after all, inimitable. But they have inherited the world of comics that Larson made safe for strangeness, for the other worldly, for metaphysics.

In his life and work, Schulz epitomized "the cartoonist." For nearly fifty years, Schulz produced a comic

strip for every day in the calendar. And he did it, as we all now acknowledge, himself. No assistants. No letterers. Just Sparky. In this, Schulz represented — stood for—cartoonists in an almost iconic way. He was what all cartoonists are—only more so.

Schulz did it himself because, he insisted, there was no other way of doing it. The characters were aspects of himself, and you can't get someone else to do aspects of yourself.

"If you read the strip for just a few months, you will know me," Schulz said, "because everything that I am goes into the strip. That is me."

And when he died at 9:45 p.m. on Saturday, February 12, 2000, the night before the last *Peanuts* he would ever produce was published, the coincidence was ineffable, potent with the possibility of somehow explaining life's mysteries. Dying precisely as his strip expired, Schulz gave numinous meaning to an otherwise untimely and therefore meaningless exit.

And there can be no more stunning an instance of the intimate relation between a creator and his creation: their nearly simultaneous departure proclaimed with the awful resonance of some sort of celestial poetry that, as he often said, he was himself the comic strip he created. When it stopped, he did.

The simultaneity was, as all good comic strips are (Schulz's in particular), a masterpiece of timing—"prophetic and magical," Lynn Johnston said. It was even more than that. Writing Schulz a posthumous letter, Johnston credited her friend with one last enviable ending:

"Leaving us as your last strip appeared was the winning touchdown," she wrote, "the Valentine, and the Great Pumpkin all rolled into one. It was more than a punch line: it was a powerful reminder that there's more to this life than we can see with our eyes and feel with our senses. I cannot imagine an exit with more class. Once again, you accomplished something extraordinary."

He showed us that the cartoonist is, almost by definition, an auteur. And he is sometimes also a genius.

"Curse this New York City sewer system! It's backing up again."

Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 6]

Comics. A1 Comics makes it a point to carry lesser known titles and if I were to buy every comic book that caught my eye, I would be bankrupt in a month. Here are some of the titles that are on the stands this week: *Alter Ego* #39, *2 Bullets in the Chest* - Dark Planet Productions, *15 Minutes - The Clock is Ticking* #1, *Astounding Space Thrills: Bloop* #1, *Daisy Kutter - The Last Train* Chapter 1 - Viper Comics, *Flare* #1 by Heroic Publishing, *Fables* featuring Dog Company and *Bigby Wolf* by Vertigo (which is quite interesting and takes you to the times of Sgt. Rock and Easy Company or Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandoes! This is a must read!), *Flight* Vol. One, *Heaven's Devils* #4 by Image, *Monster Club* #1 by AP Comics, *Small Gods* #2 by Image, *Jeff Mariotte The Shield* (if you like the TV show, you will love the comic book, it's very well done!), *Tales of the Realm* #5 by MV Creations, *Warstone* #1 by DDP, *The Watch* - Casus Belli - Phosporescent Comics, *Waterloo Sunset* by Image, *Trailer Park of Terror* #1 by Imperium, *Silent Hill - Dying Inside* by Konami, *Remains* by IDW, *The Nice Guy* by Fool Court Press, *The Gray Area* #2 by Image, *Jack the Lantern* by Castle Rain, *Duel Masters* by DW, *Fathom Cannon* by Aspen, *Army of Darkness Ashes 2 Ashes* #1 by DDP (Ash lives through this very-well-done, well-drawn comic book!), *Arsenic Lullaby*, *Black Tiger - Legacy of Fury* by Beyond Time (if you love martial arts action, then this is the comic book to get! Also, they have a new title coming out called *Dark Agent* that looks like it will be an action thriller!), *The Masters of Fantasy* with Just Bettie Page (the seductive Bettie Page lives on through the excellent drawings done in this publication!), *By Bizarre Hands* by Avatar, *Candy Apple Black*, George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* by IDW (there is no place to run and hide from these zombies!), *City of Heroes* by Blue King Studios! So, if there is nothing good on TV or you are bored with the movies that are coming out, there is always some great comic book entertainment. All you have to do is find a comic shop that seeks out great independent comic books out there and A1 Comics makes an effort to find them and place them on their shelves. If interested in the titles that A1 Comics has, they can contact owner Brian Peets at: A1Comics@a-1comics.com.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, CA

by Michael Naiman

San Diego—in the aisles

Comic Alert—This Just In: Keep your eyes peeled for a brand new Golden Age collection to be available exclusively on eBay. An Overstreet Advisor (who does zero advertising) was contacted by a distant relative a few months back and was asked to evaluate "a few comics." Hard to believe, but this was to become one of those "comics-in-a-box-in-the-attic tales." The tantalizing part of this is that the date of the books range from 1937 to 1942. Included will be *Captain America* #1-15 (excluding #7); *All Star Comics* #1-14 along with *World's Best* #1 and assorted *Young Allies*, *Daredevil*, *Green Lantern*, *Human Torch* and many more Timely issues! All issues are in the FN to VF range. Stay tuned for sales prices!

• • •

I'm baaaaaack! After 60+ consecutive issues of deadlines and late night typing, I decided to take an issue "off" so that I could 1) attend the San Diego show for five days and hang with my cross-country comic comrades, 2) move into a new residence, 3) remodel a bathroom, 4) put in a wood floor, 5) clear out my 15'x15' storage facility and, finally, 6) jack the new house up and repair the foundation. That's what happens when you purchase an 80-year-old home—at least in San Diego, where "old" is anything pre-WWII ! (Please refer to the 1986 Tom Hanks vehicle *The Money Pit* or the 1948 original with Cary Grant *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* for the grim reality!)

Looks as if this report will be out in September waaaay after the San Diego and Chicago shows—that's just the price you pay for the delay of the print media. Anyhoo, my take on the Big Show still might be of interest to some readers.

As usual, the show was about friends, food and frenetic fun-filled frivolity. Packed to the rafters, this show had to surpass last year's attendance by plenty. The Wednesday night preview looked like the first regular day of the show. With 17,000 four-day passes sold, no surprise!

There were 1700 booths available this year. In total, there were 243 comic retailers taking up 478 booths with 28% of the total space averaging about two booths per retailer. There were seven movie companies with a total of 210 booths—12% averaging about 30 booths for each vendor. Hmmmm—wonder who gets catered to here? As one long-time collector put it, "This is the Hollywood Show with a carnival sideshow of comic sellers!" Once one ventured past Hall B, it was "Swimmin' pools an' Movie Stars" plus video games, Japanamation and figurines aplenty. Hit of the show had to be Sideshow Collectibles' Green Goblin due out the second quarter of next year.

Money changed hands at a fast and furious rate. An *Amazing Spider-Man* page from issue #8 (page 10) sold for $14,000 cash. *The Creature from Pellucidar* by Frazetta sold for $20,000 at the All-Star On-Line Auction. The drawing measures 7x11 inches and is signed on the bottom. This is one of the legendary series of Canaveral Press drawings from 1964-1965. The scene features the confrontation of David Innes and one of the creatures from Pellucidar (from the series of novels by E. R. Burroughs). Many connoisseurs consider the Canaveral Press drawings to be the equal of Frazetta oils in terms of aesthetics.

Art sales in SD: *Amazing Spider-Man* #47 cover $60,000 (cash and trade); Murphy Anderson large art *Hawkman* #19 $20,000 (cash and trade); John Romita early '70s complete four-page story from *Vampire Tales* #2, first appearance of Satana, $7000 (cash and trade); *Amazing Spider-Man* #116 page by Romita/Mooney $3500; Kirby/Sinnott *Fantastic Four* #95 page $1000; Kirby/Heath *Brave & Bold* #14 Page 7 $700; Russ Heath *Our Fighting Forces* #38 Page 12 $500; Powell *Tales to Astonish* #67 splash $2000; Mark Bagley Spider-Man 30th Anniversary poster pin-up art $1500; Kirby *Black Panther* #3 cover $3500; Kirby/Royer *Kamadi* #3 double-page spread 2-3 $3500; Buscema *Silver Surfer* #9 cover $15,000 (cash and trade). No slow down in the original art market is forecast for anywhere in the near future. A Kaluta Studio painting entitled *Crimson God* sold for $6000; Gertie the Dinosaur penciled animation sheet $2200; and a Lou Fine page from *Crack* #17 $5000.

One of the comic book highlights had to be Beshara Maloof's large runs of file copies from the Crowley family's Fawcett Publications. After 1000 days of legal entanglement, Nostalgic Investments won the Grand Prize of this huge collection. The NM (9.4) books were selling for 4-5X *Guide*; the NM- (9.2) books were selling for 2-2.5X *Guide*; the VF/NM (9.0) books were selling for 1.5X *Guide*.

I got a kick out of the *Bulletman* run, especially issue 10 from December of 1942. Overstreet has never listed this tidbit, now you can have the Scoop. This is the introduction and first appearance of Bullet Dog—the Sensational Canine Cop! He is also featured on the covers of issues 10-14.

Other comic transactions at SD: *Amazing Fantasy* CGC Restored 8.0 $3900; *Archie Annual* #1 VG $300; *Batman* #23 CGC 5.5 $600; *Fighting American* #2 F/VF $350; *Human Torch* #4 $550; *Sensation* #25 FN $250; *Superman* #2 VG+ (unslabbed) $2300,

[continued on page 76]

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Amazing Fantasy

#15	FN(R)	$3550	91%

Amazing Spider-Man

#1	VG	$1525	90%
#3	VG	$330	77%
#4	VG	$270	71%
#5	FN	$310	66%
#5	VG+	$256	82%
#7	VG	$102	51%
#10	VG	$108	54%
#31	NM-	$375	96%
#33	NM	$517	1.57X
#34	NM	$270	82%
#35	NM	$266	81%
#50	FN	$222	1.51X
#100	NM	$330	1.10X
#121	NM-	$220	88%
#129	VF/NM	$355	1.24X
#129	VF/NM	$390	1.36X

Avengers

#1	VG	$217	45%
#2	FN+	$144	80%
#4	VG	$228	80%
#7	NM-	$405	95%

Batman

#155	VG+	$46	74%
#171	VF-	$67	24%
#234	VF/NM	$118	78%

Brave and Bold

#28	GD	$330	85%
#54	FN+	$63	70%

Challengers

#4	VG	$36	40%
#6	VG+	$68	76%
#7	VG	$41	46%
#10	VG+	$21	36%

Conan

#1	NM-	$158	53%
#1	VF+	$173	1.10X
#24	NM-	$15	27%

Creepy

#1	VF-	$33	46%

Detective

#238	VG+	$57	71%
#387	VF/NM	$32	50%

Fantastic Four

#1	FN	$2662	1.04X
#4	VG-	$310	68%
#5	VG	$290	47%
#12	VG	$190	66%
#16	VF-	$183	72%
#18	VF-	$158	62%
#24	NM-	$243	81%
#48	VG+	$153	1.13X

Flash

#123	VG	$128	56%
#137	VG+	$42	50%
#175	VG+	$42	1.16X

Green Lantern

#2	GD	$103	1.54X
#4	FN+	$50	52%
#40	GD	$13	29%
#59	VF	$77	50%

House of Mystery

#32	VG	$23	48%

Hulk

#2	VG	$191	43%
#3	VG+	$91	33%
#5	VG	$117	46%
#6	VG+	$97	29%
#102	VG+	$21	44%

Ironman

#1	VF	$114	41%

Jimmy Olsen

#40	FN	$17	47%
#69	VF/NM	$41	69%
#88	VF	$35	92%

Joker

#1	NM+	$25	50%

Journey into Mystery

#90	VF+	$128	68%

Kamandi

#1	NM	$27	36%
#1	NM	$31	41%

Lois Lane

#2	VF-	$350	53%
#12	VG+	$33	87%
#17	VG	$22	58%
#24	FN	$25	60%
#28	FN	$30	71%
#62	NM	$31	36%
#70	FN	$75	Guide
#70	VF/NM	$150	56%

Marvel Super-Heroes

#12	VF+	$31	33%

Metal Men

#1	VG	$79	79%

Metamorpho

#1	VF	$45	52%

More Fun

#101	GD-	$500	30%

Phantom Stranger (2nd series)

#1	FN+	$22	73%

Sandman

#1	NM+	$11	29%

Sea Devils

#2	VF-	$66	31%

Secret Six

#1	VF/NM	$26	37%

Sensation

#22	FN+	$225	99%
#40	GD	$81	1.62X
#51	GD+	$42	Guide
#104	FN+	$131	Guide

Showcase

#23	VG	$153	60%
#26	VG-	$19	30%
#30	FN+	$86	43%
#31	FN+	$44	38%
#35	VG	$37	29%
#40	VG	$22	38%
#55	VG+	$24	46%
#60	VF	$81	37%
#73	VF	$62	60%

Strange Tales

#113	VF/NM	$76	51%
#114	VF/NM	$255	97%
#117	VF/NM	$66	69%

Sub-Mariner (SA)

#1	NM-	$192	77%

Superboy

#8	VF-	$200	36%
#13	FN	$153	74%
#93	VF	$20	28%
#100	VF	$89	67%
#124	VF	$15	35%

Superman

#107	FN-	$86	72%
#115	FN	$57	53%
#131	VF+	$133	96%
#139	VF/NM	$70	36%
#145	VF	$71	63%
#149	FN-	$21	32%
#184	VF	$55	1.10X
#222	VF/NM	$20	36%
#272	VF/NM	$20	69%

Swamp Thing

#1	VF	$34	36%

Tales of Suspense

#7	FN+	$61	56%
#48	VF	$148	58%

Tales of Unexpected

#10	VF/NM	$120	41%
#43	VG+	$67	53%

Tales to Astonish

#41	FN+	$51	61%
#44	VF-	$150	55%
#75	NM-	$32	50%

Wonder Woman

#60	VG	$35	45%
#102	VG	$68	1.54X
#104	VG+	$60	1.36X
#105	VG	$300	1.63X
#109	VG	$50	1.14X
#122	FN-	$45	1.07X

Worlds Finest

#94	FN+	$133	84%
#105	FN	$25	56%
#108	FN	$19	42%
#127	FN	$9	33%
#161	VF/NM	$29	49%
#179	VF	$22	58%

X-Men

#1	VG	$355	28%
#2	VG+	$135	44%
#3	FN	$128	63%
#7	VG+	$56	64%
#14	VF+	$114	56%
#18	VG+	$51	1.59X
#19	NM-	$203	81%
#20	VF/NM	$92	50%
#94	VF	$213	42%
#94	VF-	$178	35%

Yogi Bear (Charlton)

#1	NM-	$11	20%

Young Romance

#199	NM	$104	1.16X

Dale Moore, President

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At Comics4Kids we are in a hot summer here in the Great Northwest and melting! The steamy weather is encouraging kooky sales and generous donations of comic books from our wonderful sponsors!

David Matteini, noted Batman collector and founder of the annual Dam60 CGC Forum Philanthropy Drive, says, "Those donation slips really helped out last year, so a BIG Thank You!" No, really—THANK YOU, David!! He has gotten other forumites to donate heavily as well here on the home front, too many to openly thank herein (you know who you are!). Additionally, Gary Barnes, CEO of Comics4Kids Canada, reports that we received a 5000 book collection from a private collector recently!

I wanted to take a special moment to thank my Mom for her heartfelt efforts in both understanding and encouraging my vocation, and for her constant unfaltering love and support, and my brother Doug for giving me those first comics in the hospital that started me on the path. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

Non-comic magazines have shown growth, specifically first editions and celebrity showings. For example, the early *High Times* #1 (1974) both the Premiere Edition and Collector's Edition (2nd print of Premiere issue), as well as the Fat Freddy appearance in issue 12 are solid movers in any grade. Additionally, *Penthouse* #1 (1969), *Hustler* #1 (1974), *Heavy Metal* #1 (1977), *Playboy* foreign first issues (various dates), *Playboy* Lingerie editions, *Gallery* and *Viva* are all smoking hot in any complete condition (NO, the kids don't ever see 'em!). Even fashion magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* from the late '70s and early '80s are hot out of the gate—foremost for the late model Gia Carangi appearances and BlackGlama fur ads. Very HTF intact specimens!! When third party grading catches up to encapsulate these gems it will be interesting to see the page count breakdown. *High Times* #1 Collector's Edition FN $51; *Cosmopolitan* April 1982 (Gia cover) VG $51.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #19 VG $46, #19 VF- $74.99, #21 FN- $40, #22 GD $19.99, #37 VG $29.99; *X-Men* #2 VG $160, #4 VG- $83, #6 FN $73, #20 FN/VF $21, #28 VF- $46, #30 VF- $29.99, #34 VF- $29.99, #35 VF- $ 41.

Bronze Age: *Adventure Comics* #414 VG $4.99, #415 VG $4.99; *Conan* #9 VG $1.25, #15 FN $15, #16 VG $1.25, #18 VG $.06, #19 VG $2.25, #21 VG $3.58, #22 VG $.06, #24 FN $7.

I think that the early *Conans* have slowed in lesser grades due to the Dark Horse trade paperbacks reprinting the series in black and white, as well as the Marvel Comic Series paperbacks that did them in full color in the '70s—these are getting easier to find—a la eBay. Some of our prices seem low, and the grading tighter than most. This is because we have a double-money-back guarantee on our items. If they are returned to us graded less than our prescription, by a third party grading service such as CGC, we buy the graded book back for double your cost. So far we have had no returns even at the NM and Gem Mint levels. And when we sell CGC graded books we always offer a return policy and reader copies with purchase.

Golden Age: *Batman* #26 GD $91, #35 VG $117, #38 VG $157, #56 FN $152, #68 GD $72, #88 GD $29.99; *Detective Comics* #83 GD $76; *Weird Science* (1952) #13 VG- $10.67; *Weird Fantasy* (1950) #13 VG $193.

Modern Age: *Witchblade* #1 NM $25.

In closing, I hope these words find you and yours well-fed and happy! Go see *I, Robot* (or, *Yo Robot* in Spanish)—it is *ten times* as good as the chick flick *Spider-Man 2*.

Greg White

Comic Books & Collectibles
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Hello from Central Florida. We have been on the road for a month and it is nice to get back to our normal schedule. Our summer travels brought us to the San Diego Con once again. This year we did not set up a booth but were free to roam the dealers' room for one full day. Having set up and attended this show for many years running we could see that attendance in the Golden Age/Silver Age pavilion was not as great as past years on this particular Saturday.

Lots of overpriced artwork (that is nothing new, is it?) and the usual selection of key comic books that are unaffordable to 95% of the collecting market. The big hype was once again those silly slabbed graded books. I believe less than 10% of the comic buying public "invest" in these overpriced beauties, however the vast majority of comic related articles talk about nothing but slabbed books and "investment potential."

Publications such as *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, *Wizard* and *Comics Buyers' Guide* (you do realize, Maggie, that Don, the ultimate collector, would be appalled with your sold out support of slabbed books!) talk of little else. One would be led to believe that every comic book collector would need to be a "slabbed freak" just to enjoy the

hobby. Not so! Try reading these wonderful comic books for a change and perhaps you will wake up to the true joy of comic book collecting! As the old saying goes "there's one born every minute." 'Nuff said about that.

Demand continues for wartime Golden Age. Unfortunately those books don't come our way every day. Silver Age demand remains at a reasonable level with certain titles leading the way as always (*Batman*, *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Showcase*).

Silver Age 1955-1969: A number of collections came to us this summer. Funny how you can go for months with no collections coming in and then in a period of eight weeks more than a dozen groups have come our way. Runs of *Batman*, *Green Lantern*, *Fantastic Four* and *ASM* have all come in. Our customer demand for *Spider-Man* continues to be strong. The movie may help a bit but Spidey did not need the boost—he sells great! Thankfully we are selling more lower and mid-grade books. The near-mint-only collectors tend to be a pain as we seldom have what they want at the price they want to pay. Most of our customers actually read and enjoy their books.

Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 VG $2499; *Tales of Suspense* #1 FR $100; *Action* #252 FN $500; *Batman* #164 GD $15; *Pixie-Dixie* #1 FN $25.

Golden Age 1933-1955: We purchased a strong run of *World's Finest* #2-20 and a nice full run of *Mystery in Space* #1-117, lower to mid-grade books that should sell well for us. Demand for Timelys continues. Most of that collection we bought in March is gone. Wartime covers (especially Hitler) are popular. I was recently offered a large run of late 1940s to early 1960s comics that were in low-grade condition, mostly Poor to Fair. Many key issues were included, however many of them are almost unsaleable in their present condition. Too bad. Many #1 issues and first appearance books. The collector thought that he could get much more than what he has been offered. He still has the books and we are still hopeful of picking up the collection at a reasonable rate. It was too bad to see so many late Golden Age and early Silver Age books in such sorry shape. The books had been stored in a very hot Florida attic for over 40 years and were browning, pest damaged and overall ragged. Oh, well!

Sales: *Batman* #12 GD/VG $350; *Detective* #61 VG $400; *Submariner* #16 VG/FN $325; *World's Finest* #7 GD $200; *Marvel Mystery* #47 GD/VG $295; *Superman* #6 FN $525.

Original Art and Toys: As always, there was a great deal of overpriced art at San Diego. Some FN pieces that probably did not budge all weekend due to ridiculous pricing. Some pieces had that always aggravating sign 'For Trade' hung on them. Why don't these guys just leave the art at home if they really are not interested in selling? I bought a large group of Hanna-Barbera animation art from the 1980s—very detailed and well done. It will be interesting to see how it sells. We recently purchased a group of 1960s gum cards in terrific condition. The best of the bunch was the complete *Outer Limits* set.

Sales: *Flintstones* cel $25; Mickey Mouse 1949 animation drawing $150; Matchbox Y-11 in box $25; Robin Aurora in box $150.

That is all for this month. If you visit the Walt Disney World area and are interested in vintage comic books please look me up!

Bruce W. Edwards

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My view of the market is that it is a relatively quiet summer. This is contrary to the hype and always bullish advertisements that continue to spring forth from many well-known and visible sources. Comics continue to sell well if priced right and accurately graded. New comics and media conventions draw record crowds, but the back issues we all know and love are less important to the crowd. I tend to agree with what Keith Contarino recently said regarding pricing levels (late 1990s prices) for consistent sales. Those price levels are not bad, just not what you see in the *Guide*. Exceptions still abound, so it is easy to cloud the issue of what the real price levels are for collectors versus what is still being achieved by selling to monied speculators.

The worrisome part of this is the relative dearth of "new blood" in the older back issue market (Golden Age and fifties). As the comic book collector demographic continues to age, the demand for back issues of increasingly recent vintage lowers and prices naturally follow. Check out the numerous other older areas of collecting on eBay, for example, where the items being bid on are all too old to have people alive who enjoyed them in their youth. If the items are not exceptional and/or have broad crossover and/or general historical appeal, the prices are "cheap" compared to what we are used to in collectable comics. Numerous highly interesting items such as newspapers or broad sheets from the 1800s and earlier, periodicals and books from the same time periods, attractive but not exceptional coins with historical appeal (ancient Roman, British from the 1700s for examples) are priced at levels that seem like bargains compared to many "average" comics from the Golden Age to the sixties.

As Russ noted in a recent issue of this mag, something must be done to keep the publication viable. If there are not enough collectors and advertisers around to support the best comic book publication around (not to mention the move by *CBG* in their switch to a "highly commercial" format in an effort to expand their paid readership and advertising base), it's clear that comic book collecting is headed towards an even more specialized niche hobby.

I don't mean to sound depressing. In fact, today is the best time to be a

collector with the broad availability of nicely priced comics. If you know where to look and have a mature attitude regarding trends and hype, enjoyment abounds at a reasonable price. Bring your friends! Next time I'll be reporting some prices, both cheap compared to the *Guide* and some not so cheap.

Enjoy this fine hobby and ignore the investment advice and you will continue to reap the dividends of a sensible collecting approach.

Excelsior!

Patrick Marchbanks

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The summer months are upon us, convention season is here once again and the market place for vintage comic books and comic book collectibles is as lively as ever.

In the past few months I have had the opportunity to purchase several terrific groups of Golden and Silver Age books, along with many fascinating pieces of original artwork. Represented in these acquisitions were pieces from practically all genres with the primary focus being on super-hero and war-related subject matter. Some of these items were posted to our website while several pieces were quickly sold to individuals who had provided us with want lists. Throughout the next few weeks and months new material will continue to be added to the website for our online customers to scan through at their leisure.

Record prices seem to be realized each and every month for quality material throughout all areas of the hobby. CGC graded books remain at the top of all sale and want lists for practically all individuals who I have talked with. Raw material does steadily sell to the mail order customer base; however it is at a much slower rate than that of any encapsulated item. In my own little corner of the country (the deep South) anything seems to be selling weather it is encapsulated or not, however for our Internet sales, slabbed items are at the top of the sold lists. One last interesting point is that it has come to my attention that there is an ever increasing group of individuals who are searching out individual books and even entire runs of pre-hero Golden Age books. I would expect a good percentage of pre-hero material to increase in value if this sudden increase in the subject matter grows or at a minimum continues its current hold.

For the future we are looking at a complete and major overhaul on our website. Changes will include new sections for pedigrees, raw material, CGC books, original artwork, updated market reports and, if all goes well, an area of collectable card games and a searchable database for our inventory. We invite everyone to keep an eye out for these exciting new changes.

As I am planning to attend several major conventions during this season I would hope to see many of my faithful customers at these events. If you are planning to attend one of the many conventions around the country then drop an email to me and let me know when and where to expect you, and have a terrific convention season!

Jamie Newbold

Southern California Comics
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The San Diego Comic Con was beyond outstanding! What a tremendous show! For once in the history of our store we actually made more, much more, than we spent! Customers made purchases across the board regarding grades, titles and genres. We were happy to answer questions and listen to customers. The show went smoothly for us and we heard few serious complaints beyond the concerns expressed over poor air conditioning control and the huge crowds. People and celebrity watching was great for my employees and myself.

I checked with a convention staffer and learned that about 1,700 exhibitors were registered. Of those, 300 listed comics for sales on their Con resumes. A walk around the dealers' room for those dealers demonstrated how few serious back issue dealers were in attendance. I'd be presumptuous if I said the number of back issue dealers seems to be shrinking each year.

It does appear to be true as we continue to be relegated to the far west end of the dealers' room. It would be beneficial to regain the center portions of the dealers' room as we once had.

Our only disappointment was the low sales on Saturday, traditionally our strongest sales day. The crowds were enormous but the money was not there for comic sales. Probable distractions from sales were all the celebrities and events within the convention. One example was a PA announcement about Jim Lee doing an art event. From our booth we literally saw the crowd move like a tide towards that end of the colossal dealers' room. A lot of Saturday "window shoppers" but few substantial sales. Any other dealers experience this? Regardless, we had the best show we've ever had and look forward to next year.

Golden Age: *Adventures Into Horror* #30 VG/F $48; *Beware Terror Tales* #1 VG- $90; *Black Magic* V4/#30 VG/F $55; *Ghost Rider* #10 FN+ $103; *Green Hornet* #24 VG+ $117; *Journey Into Unknown Worlds* #17 VG/F $95; *Marvel Tales* #96 FN $170; *Strange Tales* #29 FN+ $115; *Superman* #2 VG/F $2300, #21 F/VF $532, #44 VG $165, #46 FN $238; *Suspense* #19 FN- $80.

Silver Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #7 VG $200, #9 GD $106, #23 VG/F $98, #51 FN $60, #56 VF/NM $114, #86 NM $115, #96 NM $175; *Avengers* #7 FN $90, #100 VF/NM $93; *Conan* #1 VF/NM $228; *Daredevil* #2 FN $162; *Defenders* #10 NM $50; *Green Lantern*

#16 VF/NM $140; *Hawkman* #1 VG/F $125, #3 F/VF $75; *House of Mystery* #185 NM $45; *Incredible Hulk* #130 VF/NM $21; *Iron Man* #1 FN $111; *Justice League of America* #3 VF $89; *Tales Of Suspense* #39 (pro restored) VF/NM $1000; *X-Men* #12 VF $249.

Bronze Age: *Amazing Spider-Man* #122 NM $450, #124 NM $90, #132 NM $60, #148 NM $40; *Daredevil* #168 VF/NM $100; *Iron Man* #55 FN $30; *Uncanny X-Men* #94 FN $180.

Scott McAdam

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San Diego Comic-Con ROCKED. There were so many people that it was literally overwhelming. The Golden/Silver Age Pavilion, as they call it, was packed for Thurs-Sat and still pretty busy on Sunday. I can just imagine what the media area was like, which encompasses about 80% of the room, if that is what you can call the vast expanse anymore.

All said and done, I had less fun this year than any other year. It was so busy at the booth that we never got to go look around for our own collections, except in the early morning or right after the room opened.

Unfortunately, gone is the flavor and feeling of San Diego Con from even five to six years ago. It seems that the Con keeps getting greedier and greedier. They love listing comic artists and media star names in the advertising, but they make them pay all their own way for everything including extra badges for friends, food and refreshments [for even the big name movie stars]. The prices went up again for dealers and I know that the people running this show could care less if there was not a single old comic dealer in this show a few years down the road. The name should be changed to "San Diego Media-Con and Manufacturer Freebie-Expo" to give a real description of what it has become. Let's face it, they socked people $25 a day for Thursday and Friday and then $30 on Saturday. It is a wonder they had any money to spend with the dealers who spend $1200-$1500 per booth to attempt to sell their wares.

The real fun for us old-time, dinosaur-like, still-collect-for-ourselves vintage comic book dealers is to help a person fill a want list or find that one book someone needs that we know where it is and they cannot find it. To see the forlorn look lift from their countenance and the huge smile appear when you pull it out and say "I told you I had that one for YOU!" That is what still makes it worthwhile.

I had a really nice older couple come and ask for elephant covers and I spent a fun half hour pulling out mostly old humor comics from the '50s and having them say "Cool, I need that one, put it on the stack." They very happily spent $100 and said thanks for the time I spent with them.

A few notable [ones I can remember] sales from there are: Buster Brown and his pets Cupples & Leon 1913 [26 page partial reprint] FN $450; *Falling In Love* [DC Romance] #30 VF & #31 VF- [priced at $85] $70 for the pair; *Do-Do* #3 [nationwide mini comic 1951] VF [priced $55] $35 to the Elephant collectors; *X-Factor* #1 original Jackson Guice art pages #21, 22 $150 each; George Tuska original color cover-like Batman & Robin artwork $225.

That is all I can remember out of $6,400 worth of sales. Lots of *Millie the Models*, all my cheap *Richie Rich* comics to one person [$45 after discount], *Little Lulu*, TV and movie comics, and so much more. I have been selling "run of the mill" Gold, Silver and Bronze in low to high grade which are book valued at $8-15 for $5 a book for about a year and a half and it works very well. People like old comics for a good deal. I actually put them in alphabetical-numerical order, finally, for San Diego and it made it much simpler for people to find what they were after.

My best customer was, without a doubt (not just because of the money but because he is a great guy and very knowledgeable comic guy), Scott Shaw!. I might add that he said that myself and Steve Wyatt were the only people he bought any comics from at this show, because we "Always have such great stuff for such good deals." Thanks Scott Shaw!

Please remember that not only are *old* comics very cool, but they are an extremely historically significant part of the last century's contribution to growing up and living adult life in America.

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The San Diego Comic (Comic-Con International) Convention was the largest we have ever seen it. We believe this attendance was the largest so far. Thursday's attendance seemed to be larger than Saturday from five years ago. As for booth sales, we set a new record for best show ever; if the economy is weak then we can hardly wait for that good one to come around. Overall we would say that this show exceeded all expectations. We want to thank all the attendees that stopped by our booth to see what we had to offer. We will continue to have four booths next year even though the booth price went up again. The only letdown of the show was that some criminal stole a stack of *Amazing Spider-Man*s from #35 and below during the last fifteen minutes of the show. The crowd was still so thick that he managed to elude our booth security. Some sales of note were as follows:

Golden Age: *Captain America* #57 3.5 $500; *Humdinger* V1 #1 3.5 $50; *Looney Tunes* #15 T, Wri 1.8 $42; *Fairy Tale Parade* #3 5.0 $75; *Smash Comics* #36 Classic Story 7.0 $250; *Dumbo FC* #17 Lc, PcFc, Series1 1.0 $90; *Superman* #61 5.0 $250; *Fight Comics* #27 PcFc 1.8 $52; *Air Fighter Comics* V2 #6 Sos 1.8 $45; *Torchy* #5 PcFc 2.5 $120; *Captain Marvel Adventures* #6 T, Ls 1.5 $85; *Headline Comics* #35 S&K 6.0 $75; *Adventures into the Unknown* #2 4.0 $150, #58 3-D Effect 5.0 $150; *Funny Pages* V2 #12 T 5.0 $245.

Atomic Age: *Dennis the Menace* (Giant) #6 1958 Hawaii 6.0 $30; *Black Cobra* #1 4.5 $70; *Davy Crockett FC* #664 7.0 $70; *America's Greatest* #5 3.0 $235; *I Love Lucy FC* #535 #1 4.5 $125; *Adventures into Terror* (#1) #43 2.5 $85; *Girl's Romances* #1 Lc 1.8 $38; *Sub-Mariner Comics* #42 Ws 4.0 $170; *Journey into Mystery* #9 3.0 $93; *Men's Adventures* #26 3.5 $55; *Superman's Girl-Friend, Lois Lane* #2 T 1.5 $55; *Batman* #100 PcSpn 2.5 $250; *Tales of Suspense* #1 5.0 $400; *Astonishing* V1 #19 Maneely 8.0 $160.

Silver Age: *Amazing Adult Fantasy* #14 3.0 $55; *Land of the Lost Comics* #1 5.0 $68; *Tales of Suspense* #1 PcFc 1.8 $235, #9 5.5 $93, #55 9.0 $120; *Flash* #111 4.0 $70; *Justice League of America* #1 Ls 3.0 $350, #51 9.2 $90; *Blue Beetle* V1 #2 "1967" 9.2 $72; *Showcase* #27 1st Sea Devils 6.0 $190; *Wonder Woman* #94 Dis 4.0 $45; *Detective* #354 CGC 9.2 $75; *Alley Oop* #1 8.0 $42.

Magazines, etc.: *Superman & Spider-Man* nn 9.0 $40; *Daredevil* #181 9.2 $25, #168 8.0 $60; *Love and Rockets* #23 9.0 $4; *Vampire Tales* #2 8.0 $20; *Savage Sword of Conan* #58 9.4 $10; *Vampirella* #37 8.0 $22.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

The Naiman Report

[continued from page 70]

#11 CGC 8.5 $1700, #25 VF $800, #53 F/VF $700.

Richard Evans of **Bedrock City** reports that he splurged for a Burger King lunch in San Diego for his crew with these sales: *Three Mouseketeers* #1 VF/NM $40 (two copies at 72% of *Guide*), #1 VF $30 (75% of *Guide*); *Raggedy Ann* #5 VF+ $70 (67% of *Guide*); *Submarine Attack* #51 VG $2 (50% of *Guide*); *World Around Us* #15 FN+ $40 (1.25X *Guide*).

One of the great things about the SD show is that deals go on in the aisles without the dealers getting involved. This is the true SPIRIT OF THE CON! Collector-to-collector transactions. I was witness to, and slightly involved in a nice deal. One collector was able to complete his "hat trick" of Lou Fine pages with the purchase of the splash page from *Smash* #31 featuring The Ray. It doesn't get too much better for the Fine collector when you have a page from The Flame, The Ray and the Black Condor.

The transaction went something like this:

Buyer sez to Seller, "Hey, haven't seen you since last year. Have anything to sell?"

Seller responds, "Just so happens I do."

"Well, bring it over," sez interested Purchaser. "How much?"

"Only $20,000," replies the Seller.

"Hold on just one minute; don't move from this spot," Buyer sez gesticulating his finger in the air.

Being the good friend that I am I say to the Purchaser, "Don't you have the Mile High issue of *Exciting* #1?"

"Well, yes," Buyer replies.

"Standing right behind me," I explain, "is The Guy who can buy this from you—right here, right now."

"Gadzooks," sez Purchaser, "You're right. I'll go ask him."

Five, yes, five seconds later, Purchaser comes back, gives the thumbs up, and sez to Seller, "We have a deal!"

Just like that. Sweet.

That's what can happen at a show of this magnitude.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

BACK ISSUE DEPARTMENT

These issues are available...

#50	Julius Schwartz, Captain Comet	$10
#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane	$8
#66	Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!	$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	$8
#76	Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton	$8
#79	Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Captain Action	$8
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	$8
#84	Morrow, Ditko, Romita Sr., Brainiac	$8
#85	Eisner, Manning, Whitman Mystery Part I	$8
#86	Perez Part I, Bronze Age, Whitman Mystery Part II	$8
#87	George Evans, Detectives Inc.	$8
#88	Murphy Anderson, Rudolph	$8
#89	Hal Foster, Frank Cho, George Perez Part II	$8
#90	Patriotic issue, Bob Lubbers, George Perez Part III	$8
#91	Johnny Craig, Harry "A" Chesler	$8
#92	Joe Kubert, Eddie Stanky, Mary Worth	$8
#93	Alex Raymond, Flash Gordon, Gail Simone	$8
#94	GA Green Lantern, Spectre, Perez Wrap-up	$8
#95	Disney strip art, Miracleman	$8
#96	Milton Caniff, Marc Hempel	$8
Sp #5	Spider-Man, Gerber Sticker Set #8	$12
#97	Curt Swan, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents	$8
#98	Western: Dick Ayers, Graham Ingels, John Severin	$8
#99	Marvel 1965, Iron Man, Hulk, Transformers	$8
#100	Charles Schulz, H. J. Ward, Pulp Roots of Batman	$8
#101	Archie, Butch Guice, CrossGen	$8
#102	Lev Gleason, Russ Heath, Commercial Comics Co.	$8
#103	Disney Comics, Jack Bradbury, Don Rosa	$8
#104	Batman, Neal Adams, Loeb & Lee, Lew Schwartz	$9
#105	Wrightson, Kaluta, Jeffrey Jones, Bruce Jones	$9
#106	Good Girl Art, Rima, Cat Girl, John Celardo	$9
#107	Victor Fox, Aquaman's Paul Norris	$9
#108	End of DC's SA, Geo. Carlson, GA Black Market	$9
#109	GA Villains, Neal Adams Pt. 2, Infantino	$9
#110	Ross, Saunders, Kirby, Wildey, Snyder III	$9
#111	SA Villains, Paul Gulacy, Jim Starlin	$9
#112	Atlas Horror, Alan Class Comics	$9

Prices include postage.
Add $2 each for orders outside U.S.
MD (5%) & MO (6.975%) add sales tax.
MasterCard, VISA orders call 800 322 7978.

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39 That Wonderful Year

by Michelle Nolan

This Month it's 1939

Most comic book collectors from the Baby Boom generation will vividly remember that special thrill they received during the 1960s and '70s when they would pick up a comic book printed with a 1930s date.

For those who were born following World War II, a comic book printed in the 1934-39 period seemed positively prehistoric—not to mention awfully rare and not a little exotic—until fandom really got going in the mid-1960s. Thereafter, conventions, fanzines, an expanding number of dealers' catalogs and, finally, the Internet and on-line auctions made 1930s comics obtainable, if not often cheap.

It's amazing to consider that in 1969, comic books from the 1930s—then no more than 35 years old—were already truly scarce. More 1930s issues, of course, have surfaced since the end of the 1960s, since not a few were still stored away in attics, basements and a handful of childhood collections. Consider, though, how far more common comic books from the late 1960s and early '70s are now, albeit not often in near-mint condition.

A dime was a lot of money for a kid during the Great Depression, which pretty much lasted through the 1930s. That's why the comic book field didn't really explode until 1939—the first year in which original material overtook newspaper comic strip reprints in publication frequency.

Much of that original material was costume and super-hero stories. In that wonderful year 1939, nearly one-third of the total number of 322 newsstand comic books featured super-heroics. The super good guys (no super women yet) were the prime attractions in fully 100 comic books, give or take a couple and depending on how you define "costume hero." That almost perfectly accounts for the growth of comics from 223 issues in 1938 to 322 in 1939.

Newspaper reprint comics were still a huge part of the 1939 field, of course, with 135 issues devoted entirely or largely to the funnies. But never again would reprints play such a large role in comic book circulation. The year 1939 was unquestionably the turning point.

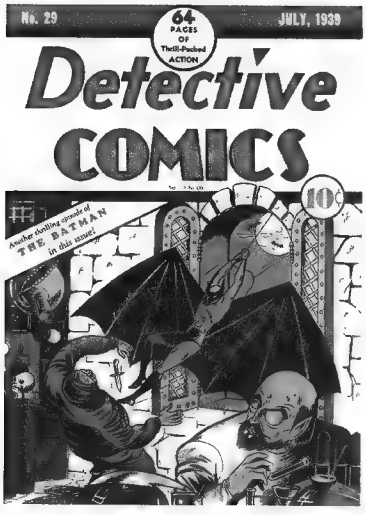
In retrospect, it seems utterly amazing that DC Comics—then known as National Periodical Publications or Detective Comics, Inc.—needed well over a year to fully realize what a valuable property they had in Superman, the first true comic book super-hero, Dr. Occult and The Phantom notwithstanding. In fact, the Man of Steel didn't take over permanent possession of the covers of *Action Comics* until #19 (Dec 1939). He made full-fledged cover appearances on #1, 7, 10, 13, 15 and 17—only one-third of the first 18 issues!

In contrast, Batman—by far the most memorable character created in 1939—took over the covers of *Detective Comics* for good in #35 (Jan 1940), not long after his debut in #27 (May 1939). Batman, though, was more in tune with themes of the most popular pulps, none of whom even remotely featured a character like Superman. The pulps were in the middle of their own Golden Age of circulation, led by *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow* and *The Spider* among the hero titles.

In that wonderful year 1939, the vast majority of the super/costume heroes resembled Batman a lot more than Superman. They included Sandman in *Adventure Comics*, Crimson Avenger in *Detective Comics*, Blue Beetle and The Flame in *Mystery Men Comics*. The Arrow in *Funny Pages*, and Bob Phantom in *Speed Comics*, Amazing Man in his own title, and Sub-Mariner and The Human Torch in *Marvel Comics*—the vanguard of dozens to debut in the 1940-41 period.

Likewise, the newspaper reprints featured fantastic but human heroes—Tarzan, The Phantom, Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers, among others.

In 1939, though, comic books were still not a huge presence on the



newsstands. On the average, there were only about six new issues each week, and there were only 56 titles in all (counting Single Series and Feature Books as one title). In fact, the pulps still far outnumbered the comics—pretty much for the last time. During the 1940s, even with paper restrictions, the total number of comic books grew each year, in direct contrast to what was happening with the pulps.

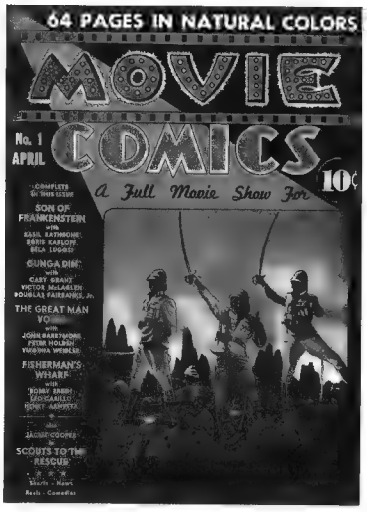
Four significant pulp publishers took their baby steps into the comic book world in 1939—Standard/Pines (*Best* #1-2), Columbia (MLJ's *Blue Ribbon* #1-2 and *Top-Notch* #1), Marvel (*Marvel* #1-2) and Fiction House (*Jumbo* #5-11—*Jumbo* started in 1938 but was still Fiction House's only comic in 1939). All four of these publishers became major players in the comic book market, starting in 1940.

They were nowhere near as important in 1939, though, as DC, Centaur and Dell, which combined to publish 189 of the 322 newsstand issues (thanks to Dan Stevenson's amazingly thorough issue-by-issue database for the counts). Centaur (otherwise known as Comic Corporation of America) was out of business by 1942, while DC and partner All-American steadily grew (and had merged three years later).

Today, Centaur's comics are curious period pieces, valuable primarily because they are scarce and contain early work by several comic book pioneers. All 1939 DCs, of course, are worth big bucks even in low-grade condition.

Taking the lead of the pulps, DC gets credit for the most revolutionary development in 1939 comics by making Superman the first original comic book character to get his own regularly published comic book beginning with #1 (Summer). In 1939, the only other such comic books were *Mutt & Jeff* #1, a newspaper reprint title, and *Blue Beetle* #1 (Winter 1939-40). *Amazing Man Comics* and *Silver Streak Comics* were basically anthologies, which still totally dominated the field, whether with newspaper reprints or original material.

DC also played the major role in its quick 1939 suit against publisher Victor Fox for his knockoff character Wonderman, created by Will Eisner in *Wonder Comics* #1 (May 1939). Wonderman never appeared again, though plenty of different super-heroes began to appear when the title became *Wonderworld* with #3 (Jul 1939).



Fox was among several publishers who got their start in 1939, also including Quality, Harvey (through two small imprints) and Lev Gleason (through another small imprint). Just to show how small the field was in 1939, though, consider that after the aforementioned total of 189 DC, Centaur and Dell issues combined, there were 40 from United Features Syndicate and 31 from hardback book publisher David McKay. The rest of the industry accounted for a whopping total of 62 issues from 12 companies!

In 1939, comic books were still nowhere near as diverse as they soon started to become. There were no regularly published comics filled with romance, crime, horror, teen humor and funny animal themes, though the Feature Books and Single Series titles touched on some of these themes. All of those genres were represented by newspaper reprints, more or less, but they weren't the stuff of headline original material in comics.

As hard as it seems to believe today, there was not a single regularly published funny animal title published in 1939. But then, animation was just beginning to boom.

One of DC's biggest investments in 1939 became its first failure—*Movie Comics* #1-6 (Apr 1939-Sep 1939). Not until the 1950s would movie adaptations become viable commercial commodities, following a few more experiments.

Ironically, that wonderful year 1939 is considered the peak of Hollywood's Golden Age of studio-system movie production, with the likes of *Gone With the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Dark Victory*, *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Ninotchka*, *Stagecoach*, *Gunga Din* and *Of Mice and Men*.

It's also noteworthy that 1939 was the year Pocket Books, Inc., began the paperback book revolution with the first modern quarter book line, publishing 36 different titles following a limited experiment with unnumbered editions of *The Good Earth* in 1938. The paperbacks eventually would become a prime factor in pushing the pulp magazines off the newsstands.

World War II would put something of a crimp in all things paper, but 1939 was, indeed, a wonder-filled and wonderful year.

Book Review
by Paul Gravett

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Against the Grain:
Mad Artist Wally Wood
edited by Bhob Stewart
(TwoMorrows Publishing, 2004)
$39.95 soft cover
$59.95 limited hardcover edition
ISBN 1-893905-28-4

A notice on his studio wall warned any potential imitators that "There is only one Wally Wood and I'M HIM!" That claim is irrefutable after reading the 35 chapters and over 300 pages about Wood's life and work in this remarkable monograph. He emerges as a unique and complex maverick and, as editor Bhob Stewart's title cleverly puns, as a "Mad Artist" who often went "against the grain" by rebelling against the exploitation and short-sightedness of many editors and publishers in the comics industry, as well as the stifling constraints of the Comics Code Authority.

For example, years before young superstars like Jim Steranko and Barry Smith first rejected the poor conditions and non-existent royalties and rights available to mainstream comic book creators in the early Seventies, Wood had walked away from Stan Lee's Marvel in 1965 after his short but brilliant revitalization and redesign of Daredevil. We can only imagine what wonders Wood might have crafted for the House of Ideas, had he been allowed more credit and stayed on. Instead, Wood soon came to have no illusions about either Marvel or DC, damning them both as "fascist states. I use them when I need them, but they have no power over me." Wood might do some polished penciling or inking for them, but he saw himself as a rebel and a pioneer who demanded more of his chosen medium.

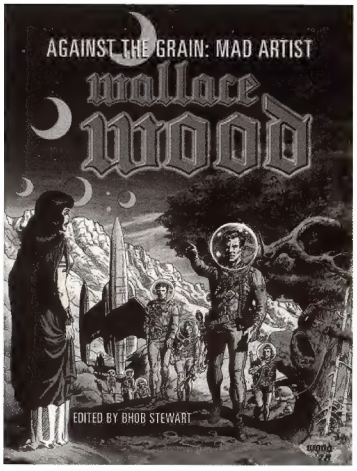
This volume explains how, again and again in his turbulent career, Wood pursued different paths in his constant desire for the freedom to create his worlds on paper in whatever way he wished, and to control his work's publication, distribution and rewards. And how, equally often, his grand, optimistic ambitions would eventually fade or collapse. It's tantalizing and frustrating to read here about the proposals that never saw their full potential and see sketches and ideas for some of them. Just imagine how his life might have changed if Wood had been able to edit a new adult comics magazine from James Warren to be called *Pow!*, to design an animated cartoon show for Terrytoons or Paramount, to illustrate the comic adaptation of the movie *Alien*, to have a hit syndicated newspaper strip of his own (three of his 18 episodes of *Bucky's Christmas Caper* in 1967 hint at how this might have happened), to take over Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*, or to work for *Heavy Metal* magazine (one would have thought a perfect vehicle for his work) or on full-length adult albums for leading publishers in France. Amid all these missed opportunities, and more letdowns from companies closing down or failing to honor their commitments, Stewart writes "Wood's cynicism about the field he worked in was not only understandable but contagious."

In 1966 Wood arrived at the bold solution of publishing his comics, and those by others, for himself in the seminal *witzend* magazine, and later from 1978 in his Tolkien-esque graphic novel epic *The Wizard King*. I couldn't help wondering how different this all might have been, if only Wood had been able to enjoy some of the benefits provided to creators with the arrival of the direct sales market. Sadly, these came too late. Wood struggled with debilitating migraines and depression throughout his life, not helped by his around-the-clock sessions at the drawing board to meet deadline demands and an alcoholic addiction that led to excessive drinking binges. Faced with failing kidneys and being hooked up to a dialysis machine, he took his own life in 1981. He was only 54.

Wood's suicide inevitably hangs over some of the writings and discussions here, but this book is not some morbid wake or cold psychoanalysis. Nor is it an uncritical, gushing hagiography. Stewart has made a successful effort to tell the truth, the good, the bad and even the ugly, so we can try to understand and empathize with this troubled and talented man from rural Minnesota. Particularly revealing to read are the funny and sometimes painful reminiscences by a group of Wood's former assistants transcribed here and apparently uncensored. Stewart was joined by Richard Bassford, Nick Cuti, Paul Kirchner and Bill Pearson as they recalled Wood's wild practical jokes and drinking escapades, the studio discussions and antics, his artistic influence on them, his generosity and almost childlike charm. They may have begun by idolizing him unrealistically, but they clearly loved this man for all his sometimes strange or difficult behavior. But I found it less easy to smile at their memories of his disintegrating marriages, his refusal to accept advice or help, his final rapid decline, and particularly his obsession with firearms. Guns figured in several of his pranks and accidents; Kirchner reveals that he even got paid for a job once with Wood's personal .44 Magnum. And it was with one of his own guns that Wood killed himself.

There are some eloquent and considered appraisals of Wood, the man and the artist, in this compilation. John Workman's two pieces open and close the volume with sensitivity and insight. Stewart provides the longest chapter entitled "Against the Grain," examining Wood's family, upbringing and earliest drawings through to his burgeoning comic book career in New York. So thorough is his biographical research that Stewart gives us almost too much information at times, from exact population figures to tangential facts about 14th century Norse explorers.

These aside, Stewart does have access to an abundance of firsthand information about the family, including the recollections of Wally's elder brother Glenn, who was taller and admired as more manly by their father than Wally, who was quiet, artistic and slight of build. Stewart quotes a telling anecdote told to Nick Cuti about how, when Wally was in the Paratroopers, he wanted to impress his father by visiting him in his military uniform. "His father, a foreman of the lumberjacks, turned around to his



lumberjack friends, started barking orders and had them running and scrambling all over the place. Then he looked at Woody and nodded his head, as if to say, 'You see, you may think you're something special, but you still aren't as good as your old man.' " How much did this lifelong lack of paternal approval affect Wood? Might it account, at least in part, for his fascination for the machismo of weaponry, for his workaholic fervor, for his bottling up of his emotions, only to be released when he was drunk, and what another assistant Al Sirois identifies in his chapter as Wood's "subconscious urge to defeat himself"?

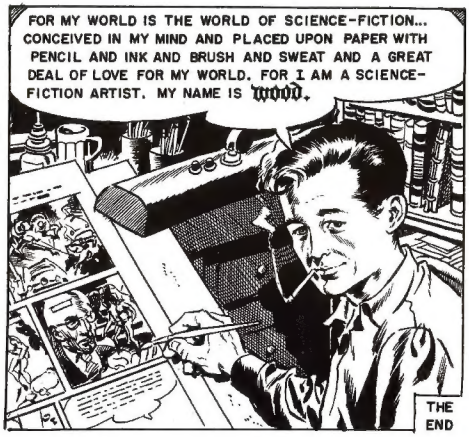
On the issue of masculinity, I also found an intriguing comment by Wood in a 1977 interview, published here in English for the first time, which he conducted in France when he won the lifetime award at the prestigious Angoulême International Comics Festival. He put forward the notion that "women are responsible for wars because they only respond to aggressive men—thereby ensuring the survival of aggressive men. So that we don't need a new man, what we really need is a new woman, who'll respond to different things from the women we know today." It's no secret that Wood cast himself as the diminutive character Weed of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, and perhaps also as such boyish, "little Wally Wood" heroes as Pip, Q.P. Dahl or Oddkin, who would often become the beautiful and enlightened heroine's great love.

Roger Hill focuses on Wood's growth on his breakthrough illustration for Avon Comics as well as his relationships with Harry Harrison and Joe Orlando. Bill Mason provides a close reading of Wood's non-humorous work for EC's war, science fiction and *Shock* "preachies." He identifies the May-June 1952 issues, drawn at the end of 1951, as his "coming of age as a draughtsman," which brought Wood's "eye, heart and mind into perfect synch." Mason is particularly perceptive about the intense, even overwhelming detail within many of Wood's EC panels. Wood himself later criticized this early approach for failing to distinguish the characters from the backgrounds and strove for greater simplicity and clarity. Nevertheless, Mason praises Wood's details for their dramatic power enabling "us to enter vicariously into the total sensory and emotional experience of his protagonists while allowing us to contemplate their actions from outside." No wonder Wood got annoyed when fans used to say to him, "Your old stuff was better."

Among the other contributors to this compendium are fellow EC artists Al Williamson and John Severin in new interviews, admirers Tom Sutton, Trina Robbins and J.D. King (who rightly extols Wood's lavish tonal art for the post-Kurtzman *MAD* magazines), and additional former assistants Ralph Reese and Larry Hama. Equally of interest is the sampling of Wood's business and personal letters printed here, from his sheer exuberance over what became the Overseas weekly comics section, home of *Sally Forth*, *Cannon* and other strips, to his zany, spirited correspondence with Richard Bassford. Quite apart from the writing, on show here are a veritable treasure trove of rare or never before seen roughs, pencils, childhood drawings, photographs by family, friends and colleagues, even his christening card, his illustrated letters home and a six-page story from around the age of eight, consisting of loose pages sewn together by his mother. Stewart shows none of Wood's final decline, sparing us perhaps his failing skills on his last pornographic output, but this is an omission, I feel.

If I have any quibbles, it would be that the book's structure, though roughly chronological, is rather disorientating and unclear. I could have done with some chapter titles and/or chapter numbers throughout the pages to give the reader some useful bearings. I also think the book would have benefited enormously from an index considering the wealth of names and titles cited, and perhaps an introductory timeline to ground Wood's life and principal works. To their credit, TwoMorrows have published a comprehensive *Wood Checklist* as an essential companion to this volume. The sixteen-page color signature includes six full-page reproductions of his breathtaking cover paintings for the science fiction magazine *Galaxy*, but this is available only within the more expensive hardcover edition, limited to 1,000 copies, which also boasts attractive red foil blocking, bonus endpaper sketches and appropriate wood grain finish.

Perhaps no volume will ever completely encompass the man and the artist who was Wally Wood, but *Against the Grain* must rank as the most revelatory attempt to convey the multifaceted creativity and the complicated personality of one of the greatest visionary storytellers in American comic books. It is sad to read that in 1977, he could look back and only see that "I've been a slave for 35 years, except for short periods when I was working for myself or for a few rare people who where daring enough to let me do what I wanted. American publishers don't care about the quality of their comics; all they care about is keeping people from saying what they want to say." I find that however wonderful the work he left us truly is, Wood's fate remains a tragedy of squandered potential and troubled personality and an indictment of the old-style industry practices that refused to accommodate them.


FOR MY WORLD IS THE WORLD OF SCIENCE-FICTION... CONCEIVED IN MY MIND AND PLACED UPON PAPER WITH PENCIL AND INK AND BRUSH AND SWEAT AND A GREAT DEAL OF LOVE FOR MY WORLD. FOR I AM A SCIENCE-FICTION ARTIST. MY NAME IS WOOD.
THE END

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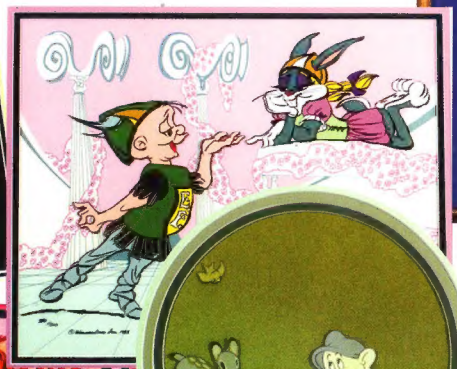

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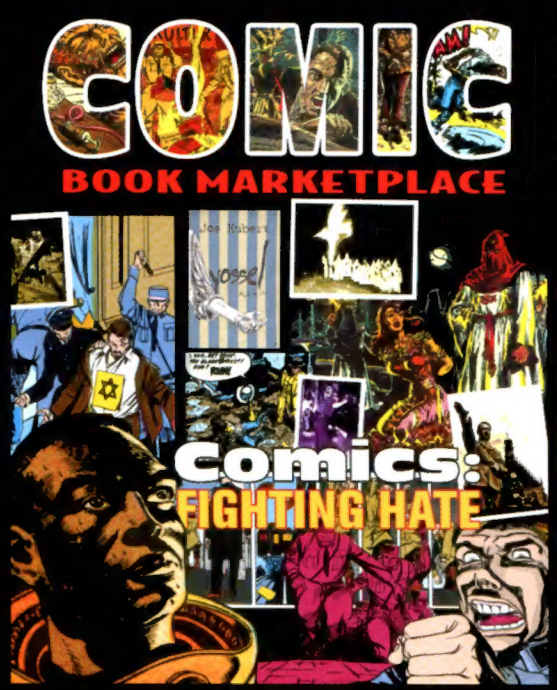
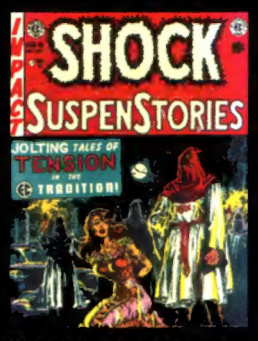
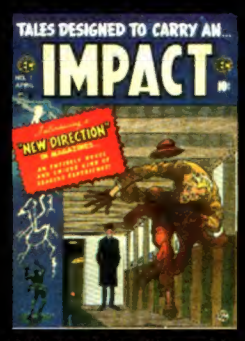


In *Comic Book Marketplace* #116 we take a look at a serious topic: First, how Jews created the comic book in the first place, and then, how crusading publishers like William M. Gaines used this medium to fight against racism and anti-Semitism in stories like "Judgment Day," "Master Race" and the regular series of "preachies" which appeared in *Shock SuspenStories* in the early 1950s.

The first part of Arie Kaplan's "How Jews Created the Comic Book Industry."



EC's hard-hitting stories on racism and anti-Semitism.

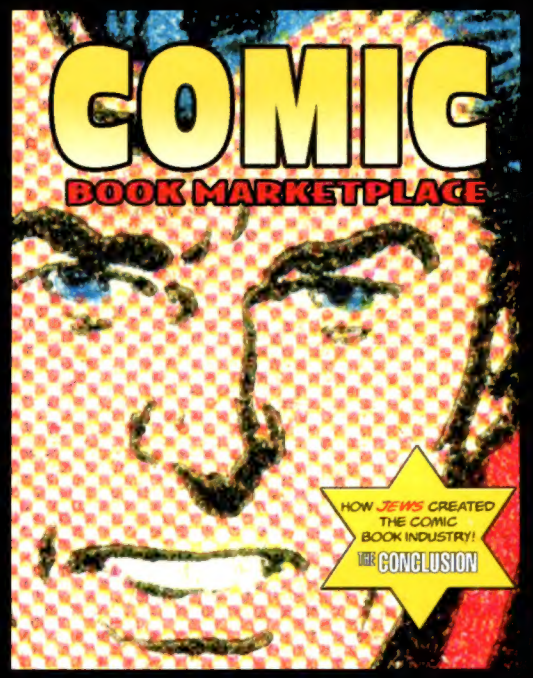


Feldstein and Krigstein's powerful story "Master Race."

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #117

In Comic Book Marketplace #116 the focus of the three-part series about "How the Jews Created the Comic Book Industry" by Arie Kaplan was on creators of the Golden Age. In *CBM* #117 we continue with Part II of this series by looking at Silver Age creators like Julius Schwartz, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #118



In *Comic Book Marketplace* #118 we conclude our three-part series on the Jewish origins of comic books. We'll take a look at Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, Joe Kubert's *Yossel* and Will Eisner's *Fagin the Jew*. And, as always, our regular columnists will surprise and delight you with their comics lore.